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Issue 116 | August 2015

FREE
ISSUE

116

plus

- 10 of the best digital images
 - **Epic game concepts**
 - Create an infected character
 - **and much more!**

VIBRANT SPEED PAINTINGS

Freelance artist Afanur Rashid shows us his stunning speed paintings drawn from detailed sketches in 30 minutes or less

Editor's Letter



ANNIE MOSS
Junior Editor

2dartist is now on Facebook!

Welcome to 2dartist issue 116!

Hello! In this month's issue we are featuring the talented Paul Canavan who talks about his work as a games artist. We also have a showcase of drawings by traditional artist Christo Dagorov, and bright 30-minute paintings from prolific speed painter Afanur Rashid.

If that wasn't enough to get your creativity flowing, we have project overviews from expressive painter Wadim Kashin, and experienced concept artist Bram 'Boco' Sels. In our tutorials you can learn how to create a character concept in our robot machine tutorial, design a tsunami, and draw a hovering vehicle with depth. David Roya also continues our photo manipulation series with an infected character. Enjoy!

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Contributors



PAUL CANAVAN

Paul Canavan is the lead artist working for Scottish indie game studio Blazing Griffin, based in Edinburgh. He also works as a freelance illustrator, and teaches at The Oatley Academy, an online art education school.



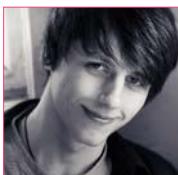
AFANUR RASHID

Afanur Rashid is a freelance artist from Dhaka, Bangladesh experienced in 2D character animation and web design. In his personal work Rashid likes to create paintings in under 30 minutes.



CHRISTO DAGOROV

Christo Dagorov is a Switzerland-based freelance artist. He has exhibited across Europe and in New York. Christo is currently working on drawings in silverpoint and goldpoint on paper.



STEPHAN GÜNTHER

Stephan Günther is a concept artist, illustrator, and graphic designer based in Dessau, Germany. His extensive body of work includes character sketches, environments and elaborate creatures.



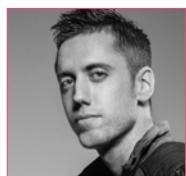
EFFLAM MERCIER

Eflam Mercier is a freelance concept artist and creative consultant based in Paris, working for film and games companies. He enjoys experimenting with different processes, telling stories with mood and lighting.



DONGLU YU

Donglu Yu is a senior concept artist working at Warner Brothers Games Montreal. She has worked on many games, including *Assassin's Creed*, *Far Cry 4* and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.



DAVID ROYA

David Roya is a self-taught digital artist based in Malmö, Sweden. He works mainly with graphic design, matte painting and retouching. David currently works for IKEA Communications as a retoucher.



MARKUS LOVADINA

Markus Lovadina, aka malo, is currently working as a senior concept artist for Rocksteady Studios, as well as a freelance concept artist/illustrator for the games and movie industry.



WADIM KASHIN

Wadim Kashin is a self-taught artist based in Moscow, Russia. Despite having an interest in art from a young age, Wadim started drawing seriously in 2008 and now works as a freelance artist.



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We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: annie@3dtotal.com.

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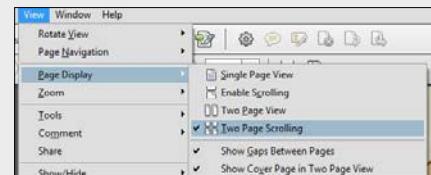
If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature within this magazine, then follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

Top tips for viewing

For optimum viewing of the magazine, it is recommended that you have the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader installed. You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD](#)

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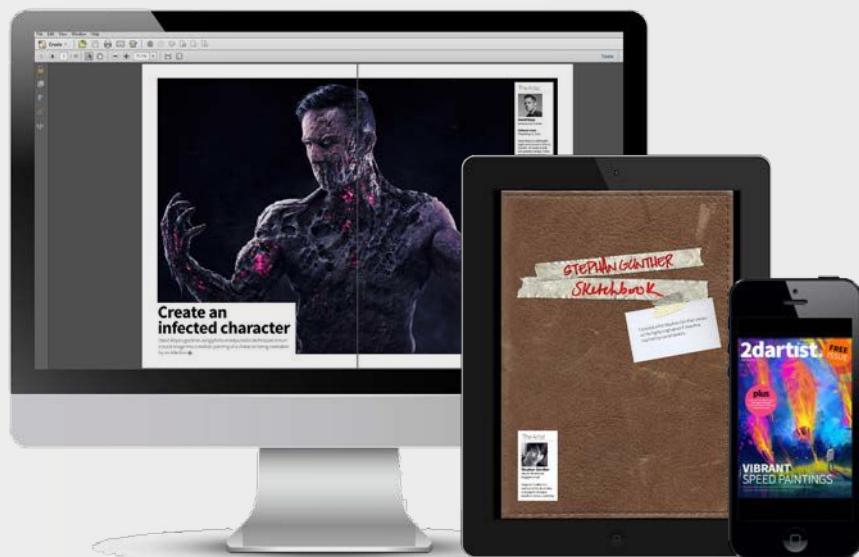
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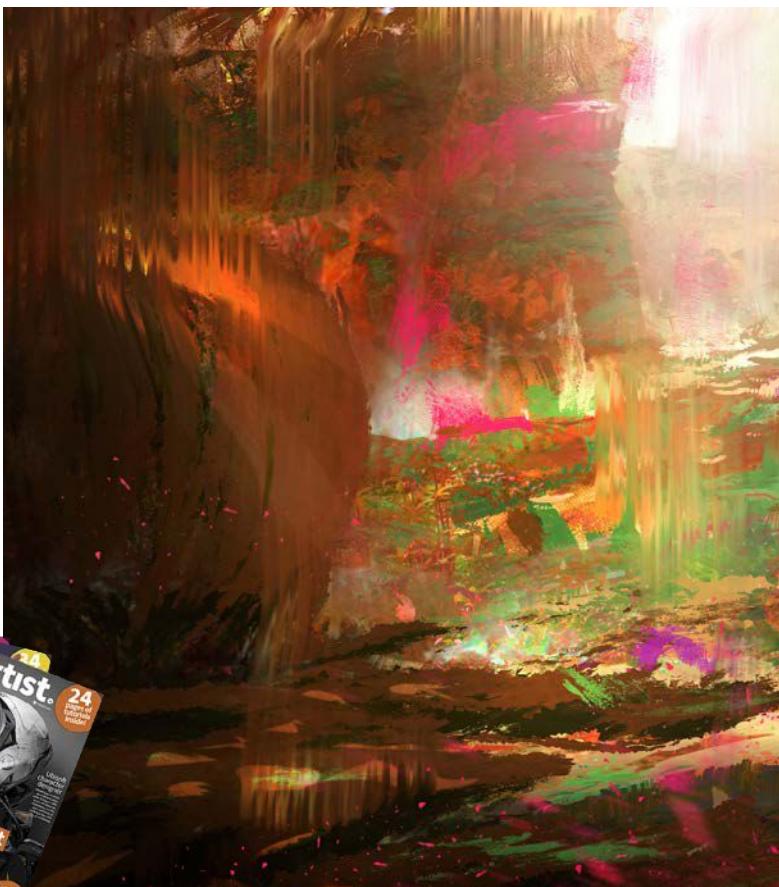
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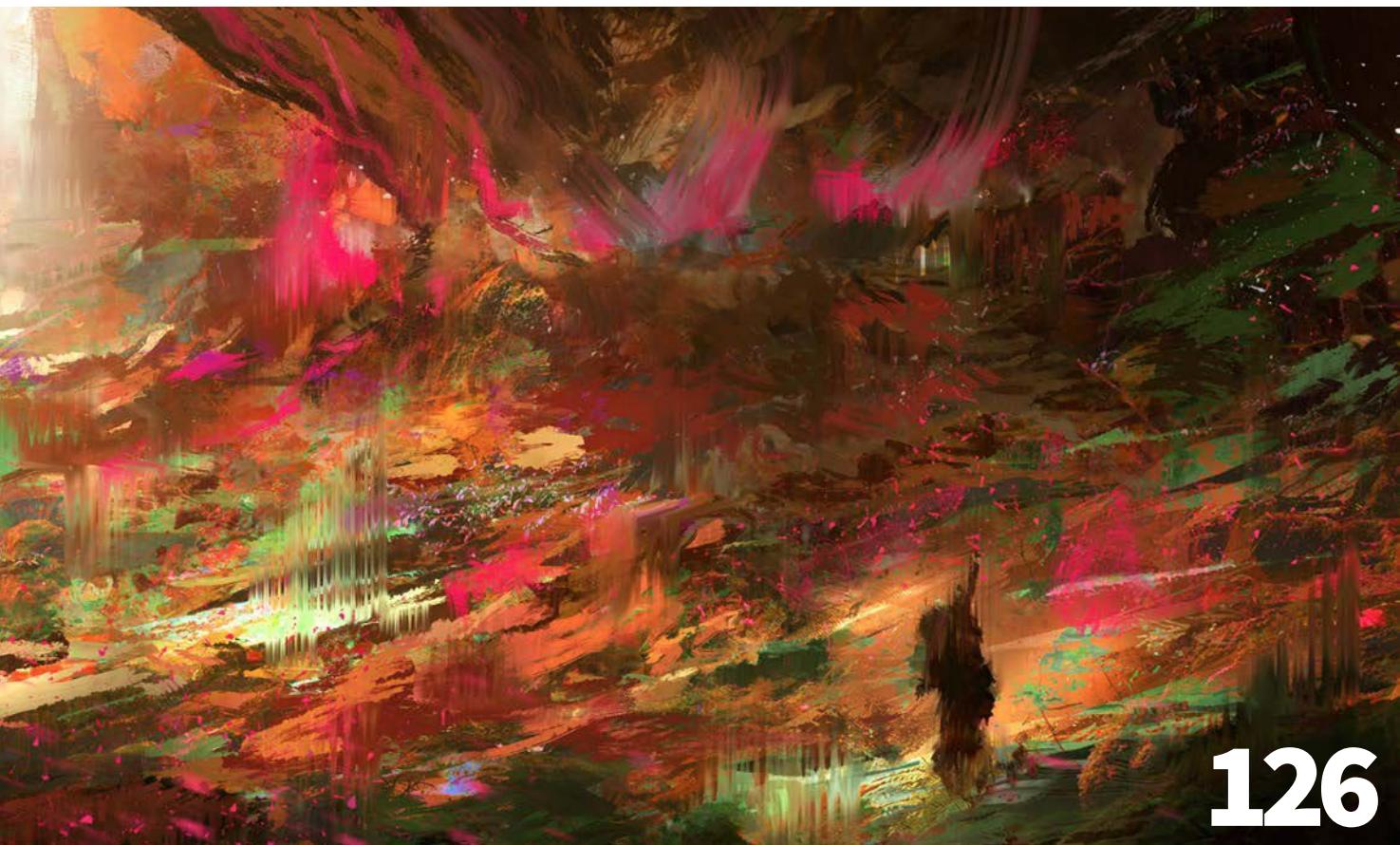
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For less than the price of a coffee, 2dartist magazine brings you over 100 pages of interviews, tutorials and selected artworks by more than 400 freelance artists to date. By purchasing this magazine you are supporting these artists who make a living from their work. You are also helping the digital art industry to grow by enabling us to inspire and educate a future generation of artists.

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The Artist



Paul Canavan
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Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Paul Canavan is the lead artist at Scottish indie game studio Blazing Griffin, based in Edinburgh. He also works as a freelance illustrator and teaches at The Oatley Academy.

Epic game concepts

Indie games artist Paul Canavan discusses balancing studio work with freelance contracts and his upcoming projects ▶



Paul Canavan is lead artist at the Edinburgh-based games company Blazing Griffin. He recently art directed their new release *Distant Star: Revenant Fleet*, a real time space-strategy PC game with an evolving narrative. He has previously stated that his focus is on creating cohesive game worlds which invite the player to explore. Paul's work is often expressive and uses a highly painterly style which instantly creates movement even in still landscapes. This month, Paul talks to 2dartist magazine about his atmospheric style, adapting his work for different projects and collaborating with other artists.

2dartist: Hi Paul! Thank you for talking to 2dartist. Can you start things off by telling us a bit about yourself, where you are from and your relationship with digital art?

Paul Canavan: I am an artist and musician from sunny Scotland (that's a joke; we still haven't even had a summer). Growing up I was lucky enough to go to a school which valued the arts so received a very traditional art education; lots of painting, sculpting, writing and great music facilities. From there I went

on to study animation at university with no real concept of what I might do with it – it just seemed interesting and different. Concept art was a natural fit for my interests; I've always been a big gamer and games of the mid 90s such as *Diablo*, *Dungeon Keeper* and *Warcraft* were hugely influential on my art. The idea that someone was actually doing those drawings for a living was (and still is) baffling to me, so it seemed like an amazing career to pursue. Many years of study, practice and freelance work later it seems to have worked out!

2da: You have said in the past that the cohesiveness of a game world is most important to you, can you tell us a bit about how you go about achieving this?

PC: I like to break the game down into simple concepts and use them to influence every decision I make, from the shape of the terrain to technology and fashion. This might be shape language, colors or key words such as 'aggressive'.

Here's an example: we have a game with two warring factions. One is outwardly aggressive and the other is more subtle and cruel. A simple approach is to use

shape language to drive their design – one is square, the other triangle. Square is hard and heavy – it's a war hammer. It represents Vikings perhaps, or nomadic people wearing heavy, functional armor. Perhaps they live on an ice world? I can use squares in their iconography, their spaceships can be blocky and so on.

The other faction is sharp and more dagger-like. This feels underhand, I perhaps look at the Romans for influence in their design – rich fabrics and an emphasis on beauty which seeps into their triangle-shaped ships.

2da: The games you have worked on have varied quite significantly in style, how do you go about adapting your style to fit the game?

PC: When approaching a new project I like to think about what will work best for it visually. Personal style doesn't really come into play here unless I feel it will fit the game somehow. I'll generally do a load of research initially to figure out what look to go with before even picking up a pen. When it comes to working on things outside my comfort ▶



- This is absolutely Paul's comfort zone; bright colors, dramatic clouds and tiny characters



- A commissioned illustration for the RPG *Shattered*.
Paul always enjoys working with characters and
playing with their interactions so this was a lot of fun





zone I'll schedule a period of research for myself and the team to make sure we can actually do it! Most concept artists are comfortable changing style to fit the project, however, so it isn't really an issue.

2da: Where are your go-to places for creative inspiration? Do you have any favorite current artists?

PC: Facebook is surprisingly good for inspiration these days, my feed is mostly comprised of artists. The Oatley Academy has one of the best communities I have seen since the early days of conceptart.org, it's a real pleasure to spend time on their forums.

In terms of artists, some of my favorites include Craig Mullins, Daniel Dociu, Jaime Jones, Karla Ortiz, Mathias Verhasselt, Al Brady, Theo Prins, John Harris, Jana Schirmer, Thomas Scholes and Dan LuVisi. I'm also a huge fan of classic painters such as Thomas Cole, Adolphe de Neuville, Albert Bierstadt and a million others.

2da: When collaborating with other artists, how do you strike up a balance between your independent creative styles?

PC: I like to take advantage of them wherever possible. We have an artist, Sean McIlroy who was previously making all of the incredibly stylized art for Lucky Frame. Because he has a great eye for shapes he'll often come out with really interesting designs which I can then work on or take influence from, and is a great fit for promotional work such as posters.

As previously mentioned, concept artists really need to be able to work on any project but you can definitely use your independent creative style to drive designs or put an interesting spin on things!

2da: Your work is often highly atmospheric, what are your pro tips for someone wanting to inject some atmosphere into their work?

PC: Study real life. I have a thing for muted, moody landscapes which probably comes from a lifetime spent in Scotland – there's nothing like going out into the wild and sketching for learning how to put mood into your paintings. Film is a great place to go for mood since it's typically prescribed by the genre; if you're going to create a stark, misty painting look at some screencaps from *Sleepy Hollow*, for example, paying attention to the palette, or if you want a dramatic scene try a film like *Gladiator* or *Lord of the Rings*. Films are color graded to enhance the mood they are trying to portray so they can be a fantastic resource for study.

2da: Your recent project *Distant Star* is a fast-paced 2D strategy game, can you talk us through some ▶



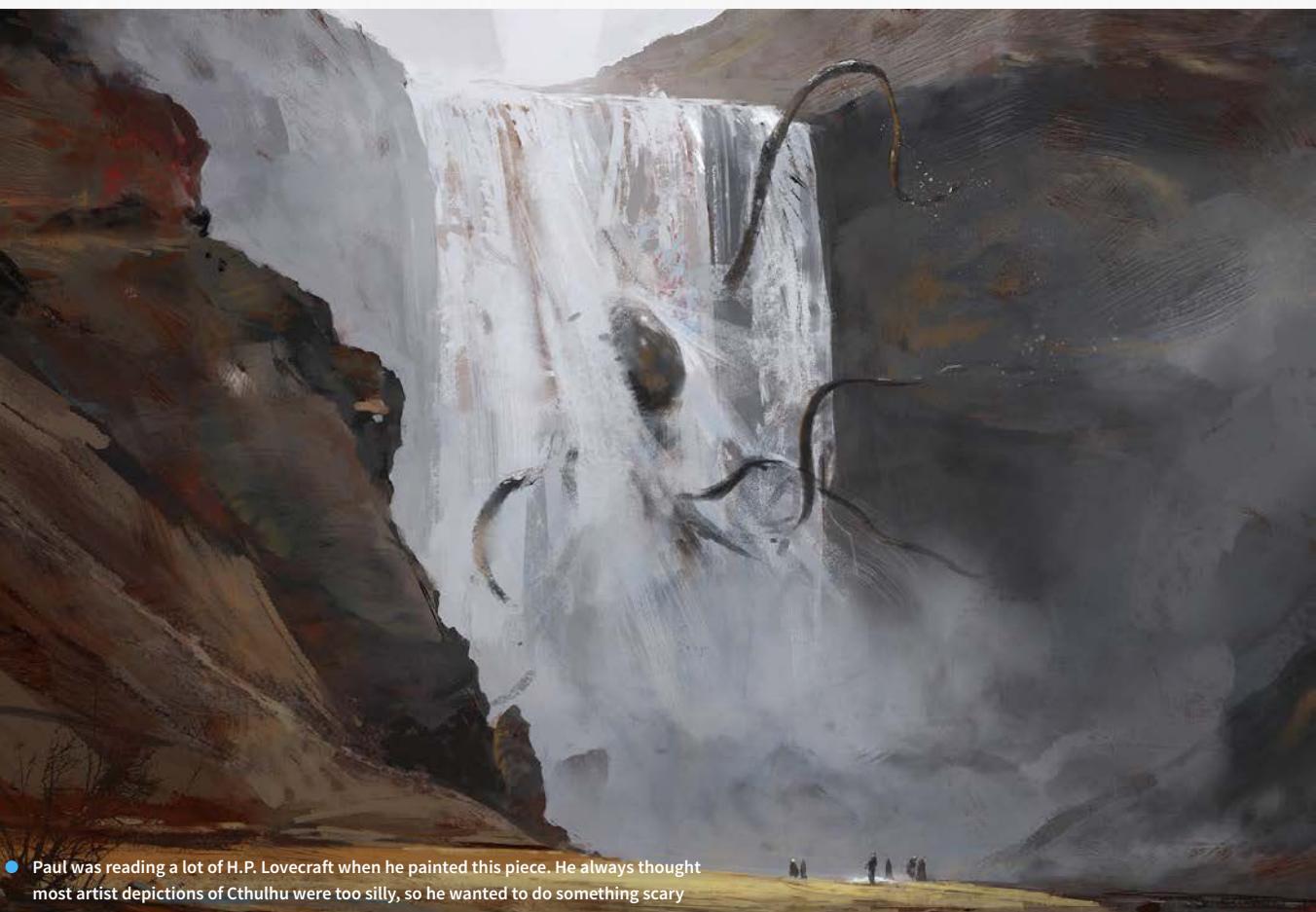
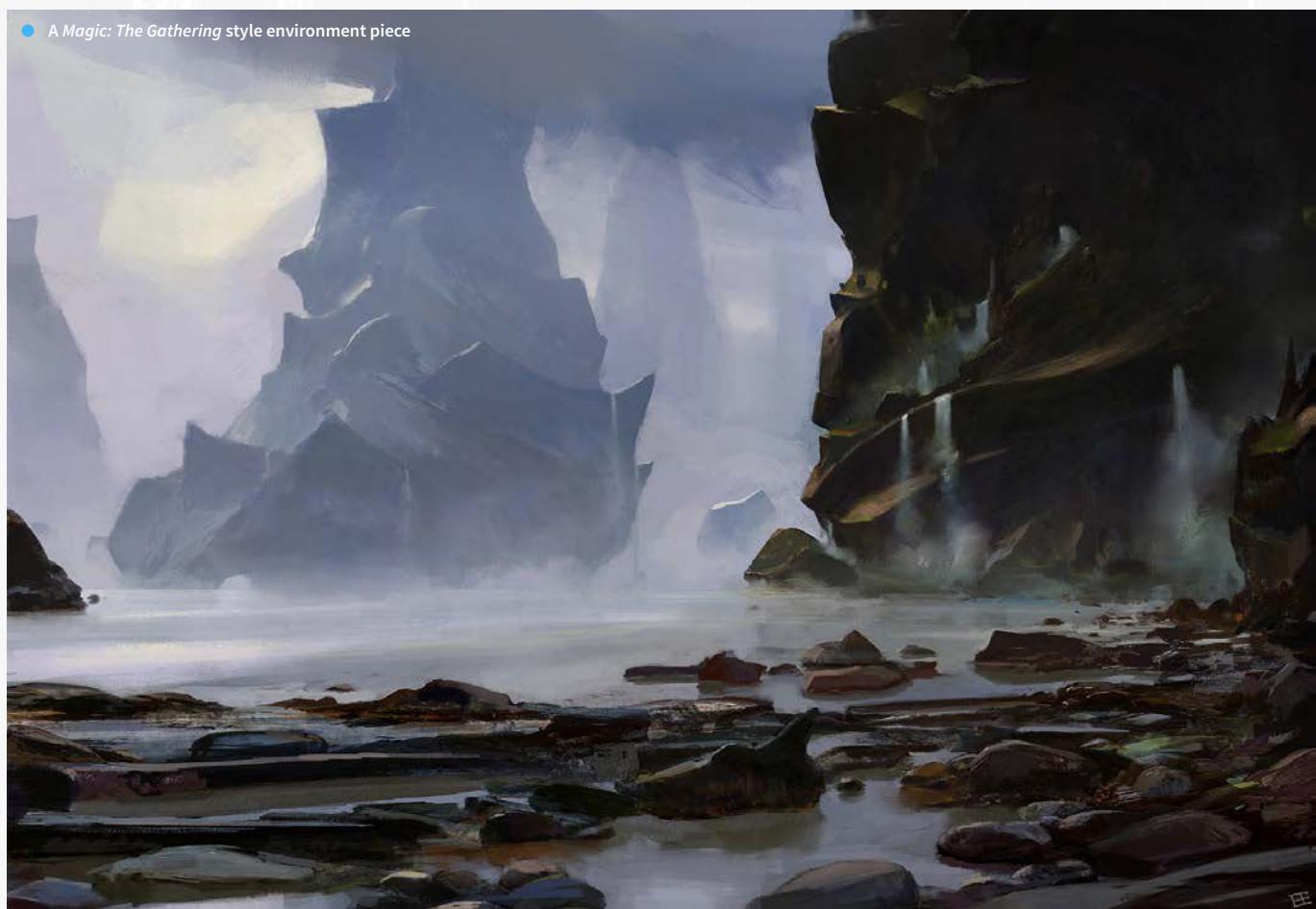
● Possibly Paul's favorite illustration from *Coranox*. Influenced by Frazetta, he kept this as loose as possible while still reading clearly

⚡ PRO TIP

Always ask questions

The key to a successful design or illustration is thought. When you are embarking on a new piece think about what you're trying to achieve, what the world is, how it affects the characters, what they wear and how they act. You want to paint an attractive woman in power armor? What is her personality like? She isn't wearing a helmet, why not? Perhaps she's brave to the point of foolishness, can you represent that in her pose? In the weapons she has chosen? In her environment? By constantly questioning your image, you will end up with something that is far more coherent and interesting.

- A Magic: *The Gathering* style environment piece



- Paul was reading a lot of H.P. Lovecraft when he painted this piece. He always thought most artist depictions of Cthulhu were too silly, so he wanted to do something scary



of the creative problems that arose. How did you resolve these problems?

PC: The biggest issue I encountered working on *Distant Star* had to do with perspective (or a lack thereof). The game is shot from a top-down perspective and because we didn't have a full-time 3D artist on the team at this point this meant the ships would have to be hand-drawn sprites. A second issue which was tied to this was getting the ships to read well against a space background, especially as I wanted that background to be vibrant and interesting.

In order to solve these design challenges I did a ton of research into lighting 2D sprites dynamically –

PRO TIP

Experiment with your technique

Experimenting with different techniques is useful for both learning new skills and keeping yourself engaged and excited about your work. Try pulling photographs into the sketch phase of your painting in order to add texture or inspire design concepts for example. Or you could create abstract shapes in ZBrush and see if you can create a landscape from them. Use 3D models in your environments and learn interesting tools like Marvelous Designer and see if it fits into your workflow. There is no cheating in art, clients don't care how you got the results, try everything.

essentially painting variations of the ships as if they were lit from different directions. I wasn't sure if this was even possible but if I could get it working, I would be able to set up directional lights in Unity

to pop the ships out and make them feel 3D. These 3D looking ships would stand out nicely from the background thus solving both problems. Luckily I came across a tool in early development called

- A painting Paul did for the game *Distant Star*. There's a John Harris/Chris Foss influence on this project



- Sketched after watching *Mad Max*. Perhaps Paul will finish the painting sometime but he quite likes it rough form!



Sprite Lamp which did exactly what I needed – after much testing I was able to get a nice result and the method led to *Distant Star*'s fairly unique look!

2da: What are your favorite games to play at home? How do they inform your work?

PC: The games I play depend heavily on my mood. I enjoy MMOs like *Guild Wars 2* and *World of Warcraft* when I want to relax, or something like *Elite: Dangerous* with friends the weekend. I love competitive online games too, *Rocket League*, *Counter-Strike* and *Battlefield* being common examples, and am a massive fan of subtle, unique pieces like *Her Story*, *Gone Home* and *Journey*. Finally, if work is particularly hectic I'll find myself returning

to some of my old favorites: *Heretic*, *Quake*, *Diablo* and so on hold a special place in my heart.

2da: Can you tell us a bit about how you entered the games industry and what you look for when building a team of artists to work on a game?

PC: After graduating I spent around two to three years just working on my portfolio and getting involved in the online art community.

The sites I frequented most were conceptart.org and deviantart, and it was through those websites that I began making art friends and learning how concept art and illustration actually worked. Eventually around 2007, I got my first commission work on a

film, and shortly after that was picked up by a game studio working online remotely. I ended up working with those guys for a year and learned a lot about the concept art process, but unfortunately was never actually paid by them and stopped once I realized the team were just being exploited.

From this point on clients started popping up more and more as my name got out there and my skills increased. I got my first full-time studio job in 2010 and since then have always been in-house!

The main thing I look for in an artist is ambition and genuine passion for what they do. I want them to be hungry, to want to be better and to be prepared to work for it. ▶

2da: Can you talk us through how the artwork on a game usually develops from the initial concept to finished product?

PC: Whenever we take on a new project in a studio the first few weeks are pretty much just our creative director and I discussing concepts for what we're trying to achieve.

I'll be thinking about the world we want to create or the story we're trying to tell, researching similar projects to see what other people have done, scribbling concepts and ideas on paper. This is where the art direction develops, without worrying too much about implementation at this stage.

Once we have something loosely planned out I'll get the rest of the art team onboard to discuss the ideas and show them the concept work I've been doing. My art director, Sim is in charge of making the thing happen, at this point my role shifts to producing concept art for the 3D team to use in creation of environments, characters and props.

I guide the direction of all assets through production making sure the style matches the original vision, and generally jump in again at the end to direct lighting and certain VFX to help sell the mood.

2da: Can you tell us anything about the projects you are working on at the moment? Are there any new games for us to look out for?

PC: We are working on *The Ship Remastered* right now, a remake of the classic multiplayer PC game. Because there's no concept art in the traditional sense required for this game, my role revolves around tweaking the lighting to make it look as cinematic as possible.

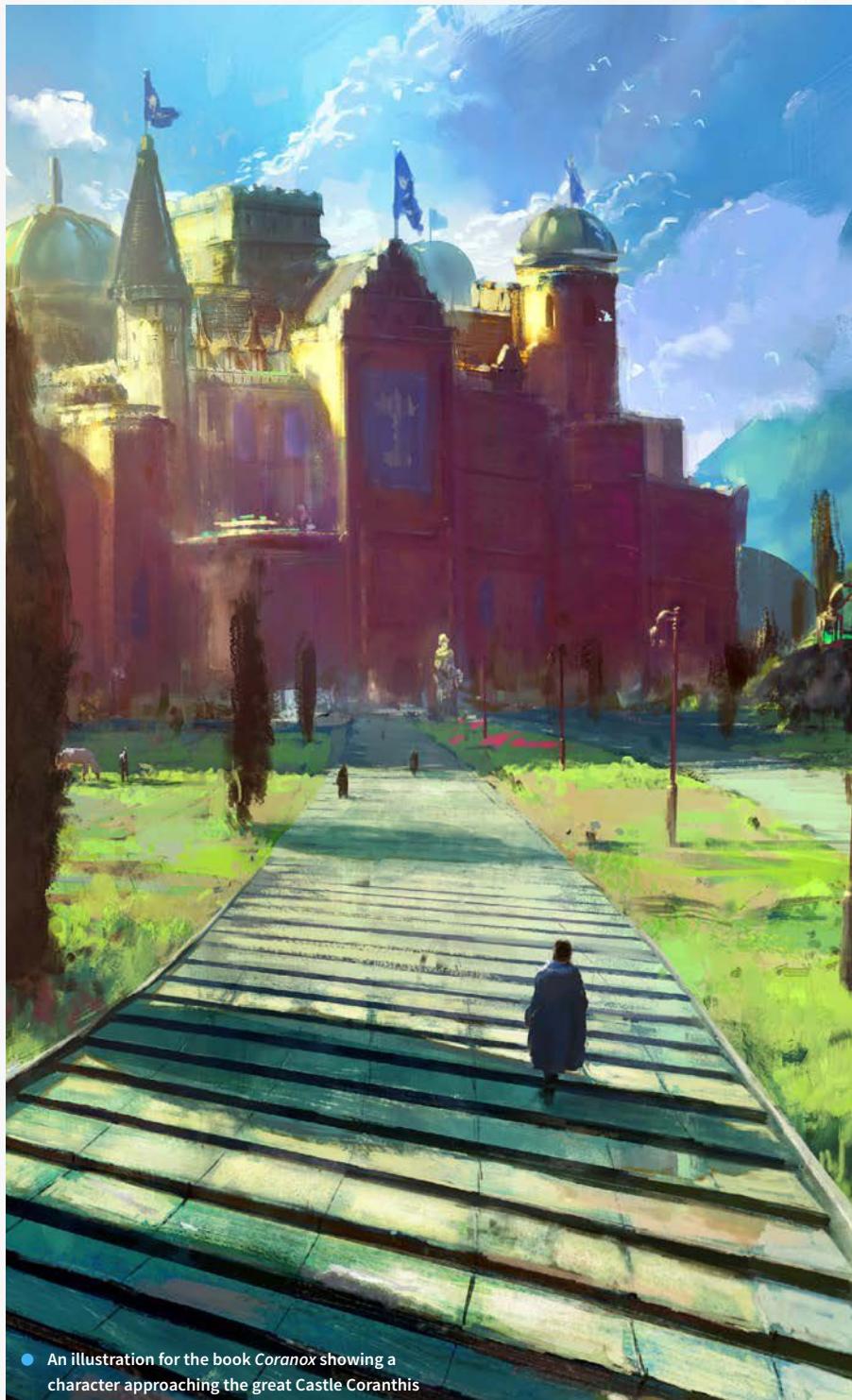
I also guide the post-processing, VFX and UI design to make the game look as good as it possibly can! I am also conceptualizing and directing the trailers for the game and doing other bits of promotional work which is always fun.

The game will be released early next year, look out for it!

2da: What do you like to focus on in your personal work? Are you a little more experimental in your personal projects?

PC: I struggle to make time for personal paintings these days although bizarrely when it does happen it's invariably when I'm drowning in client work and should probably go to bed. I suppose it's cathartic.

When I do produce something for myself it tends to be a lot looser than most clients are happy with.



● An illustration for the book *Coranox* showing a character approaching the great Castle Coranthis

⚡ PRO TIP

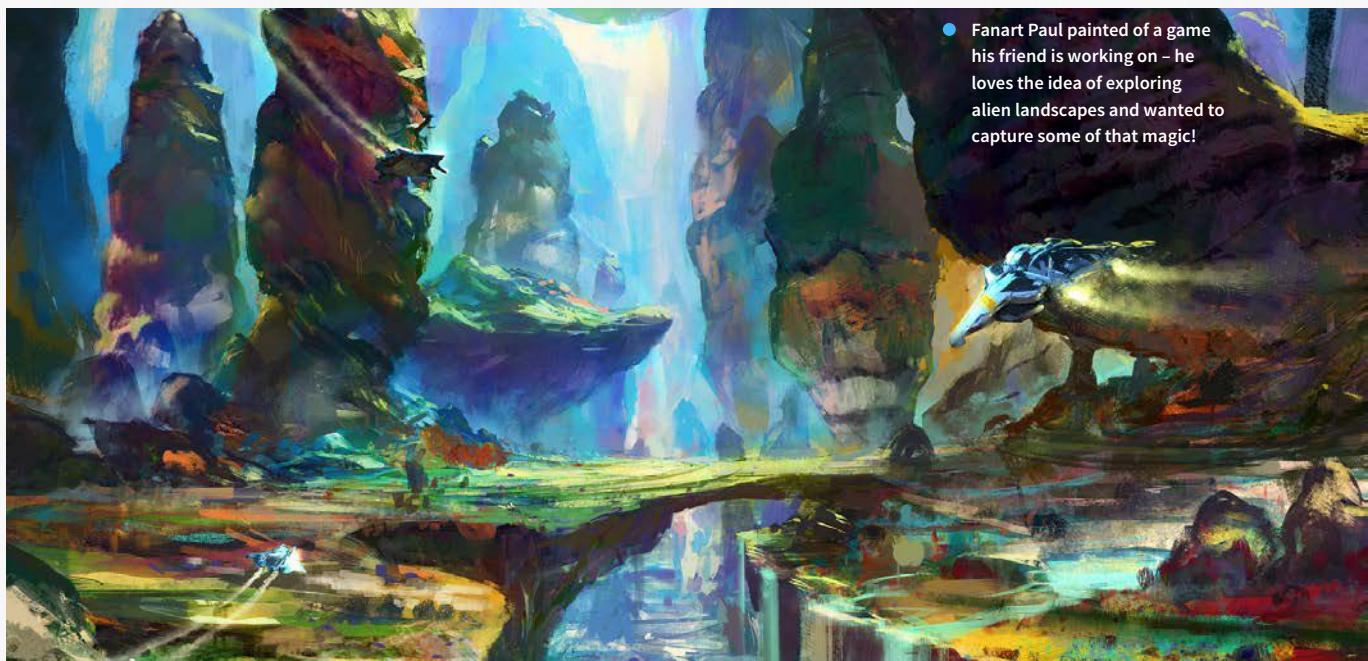
Keep it short

When applying for a job as an artist there are a few ground rules. First off, try to obtain the email of the art director you want to speak to. This is fairly easy now with the proliferation of social media – send a polite message on Twitter or Facebook and don't be upset if they fail to respond. When it comes to sending an application email, keep it brief! All you really need to do is say hello, mention why you're interested in the position and give them a link to your portfolio (you can attach a few images also although keep the filesize down). If they like your work they will probably respond, if not keep working!

- The A'kari are the playable race in *Distant Star*. Their design is influenced by both the Vikings and the Samurai. Paul used this concept to describe how those might work together



- Fanart Paul painted of a game his friend is working on – he loves the idea of exploring alien landscapes and wanted to capture some of that magic!



Subject matter can vary a lot, it really depends on my mood and if I've seen something inspiring!

Right now I'm taking a short break from freelance work to paint miniatures, but I'll be back to freelance soon enough. Painting miniatures is something I used to do when I was young and have always found incredibly relaxing. I think it's good to work on a project which doesn't feel competitive and is solely for your own enjoyment!

2da: You also do some freelance work. What do you look for when choosing your next project?

PC: I really just look for projects which seem interesting or which might lead to bigger things. As an example, I have always wanted to work on *Magic*:

The Gathering, a game I have played since I was a kid, so am taking on more card work right now in the hope that they'll see what I'm producing and become interested in my work.

Similarly, I would like to do more book illustrations so I'm more likely to pick up that sort of work! It's a little tactical perhaps, but I only ever accept commissions on projects which I'm actually in to. I still find seeing my work in the wild exhilarating!

2da: What do you like to do when you are not working hard on your various digital art projects?

PC: I play drums in a progressive rock band called The Paradigm Complex; writing interesting, complicated music is a nice challenge outside of art

and I think it's good to have other hobbies to focus on. I am also a pretty keen power-lifter and hope to get involved in some strongman training next year.

There are also the aforementioned models to paint and my girlfriend – and I have two ferrets who require a bit of attention!

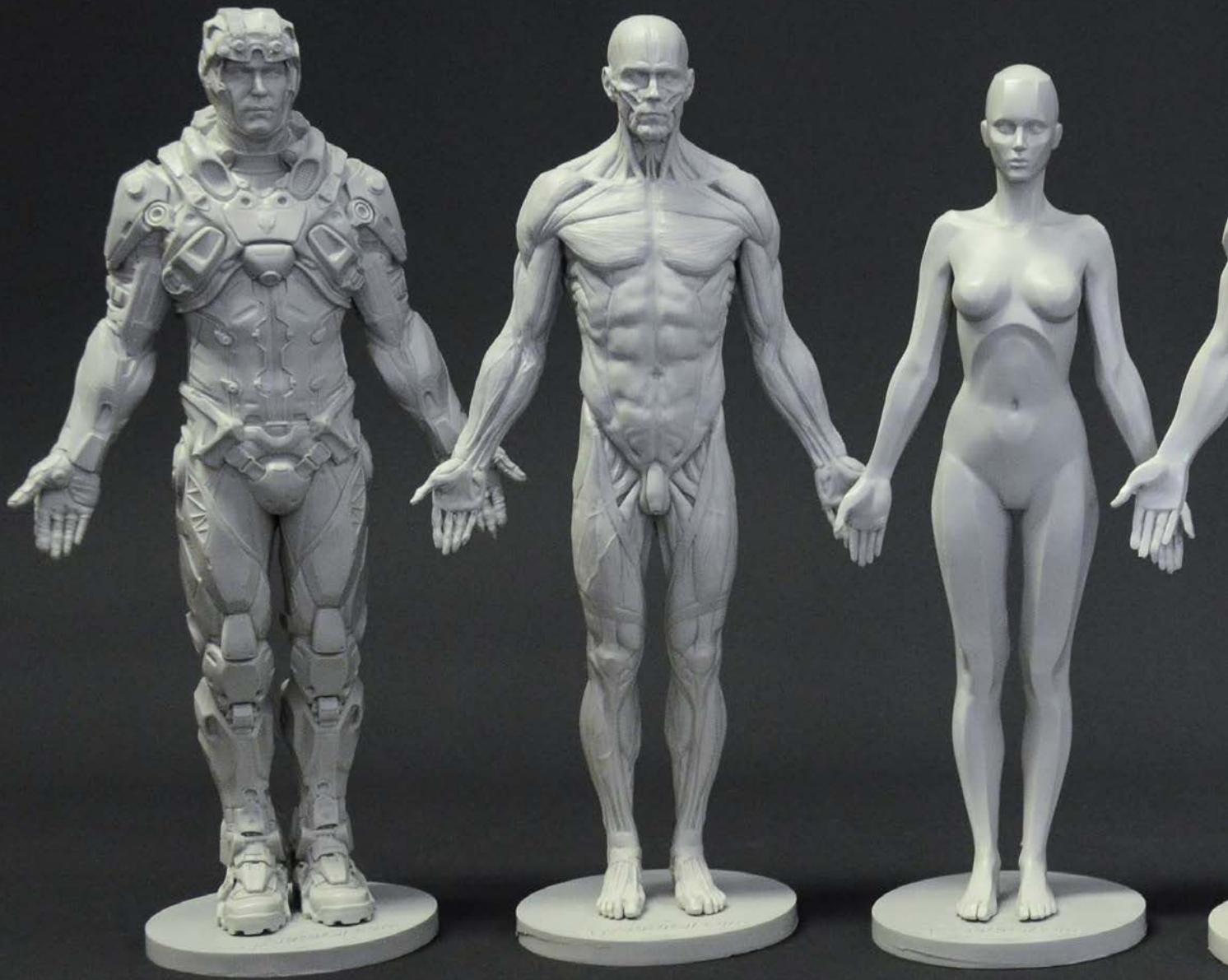
2da: And finally, what can we look forward to from you in the future?

PC: More teaching, more tutorials, more videogames and one big personal project which will hopefully appear in the next year or two! I'll be at a few art shows including THU so come and say hi!

Thank you Paul for chatting to 2dartist! ●

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Vibrant speed paintings

Freelance artist Afanur Rashid shows us his stunning speed paintings drawn from detailed sketches in 30 minutes or less ►

The Artist



Afanur Rashid

artstation.com/artist/afanur

Interviewed by:

Annie Moss

Afanur Rashid is a freelance artist from Dhaka in Bangladesh, and is experienced in 2D character animation and web design. In his personal work Rashid likes to create paintings in under 30 minutes.

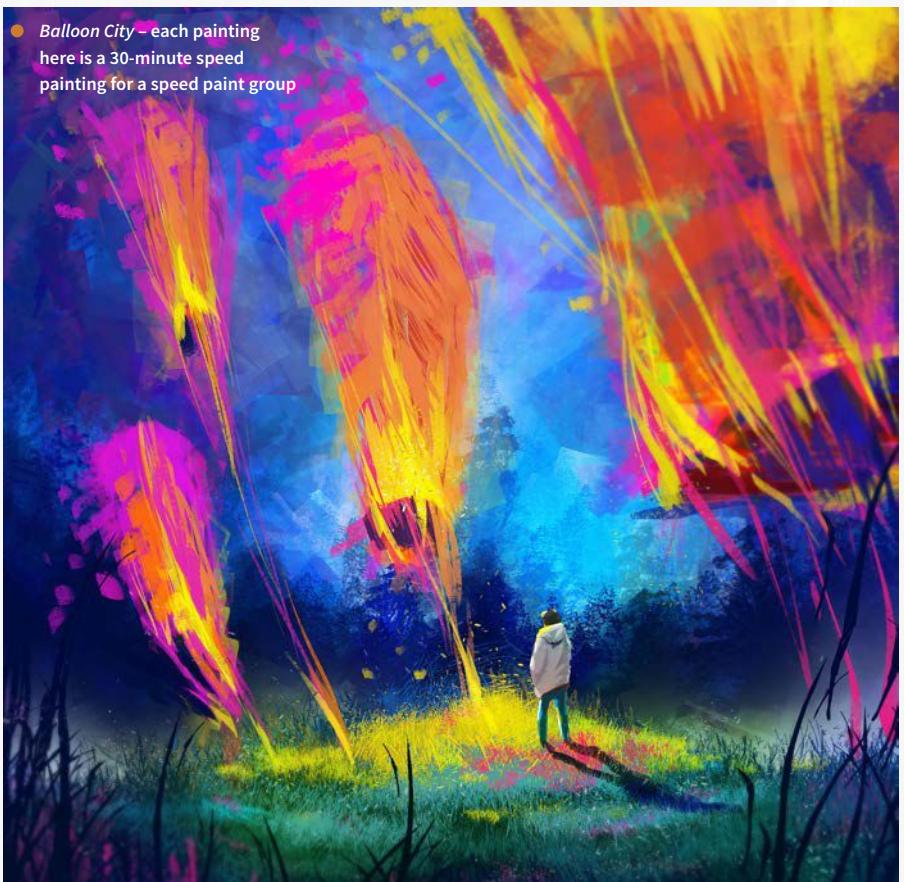


Born in Bangladesh in 1987, Afanur Rashid's childhood was centered on his love of comics, cartoons, animation movies and the arts. So it is unsurprising that Afanur has used his passion for art and animation to launch a freelance career as an artist.

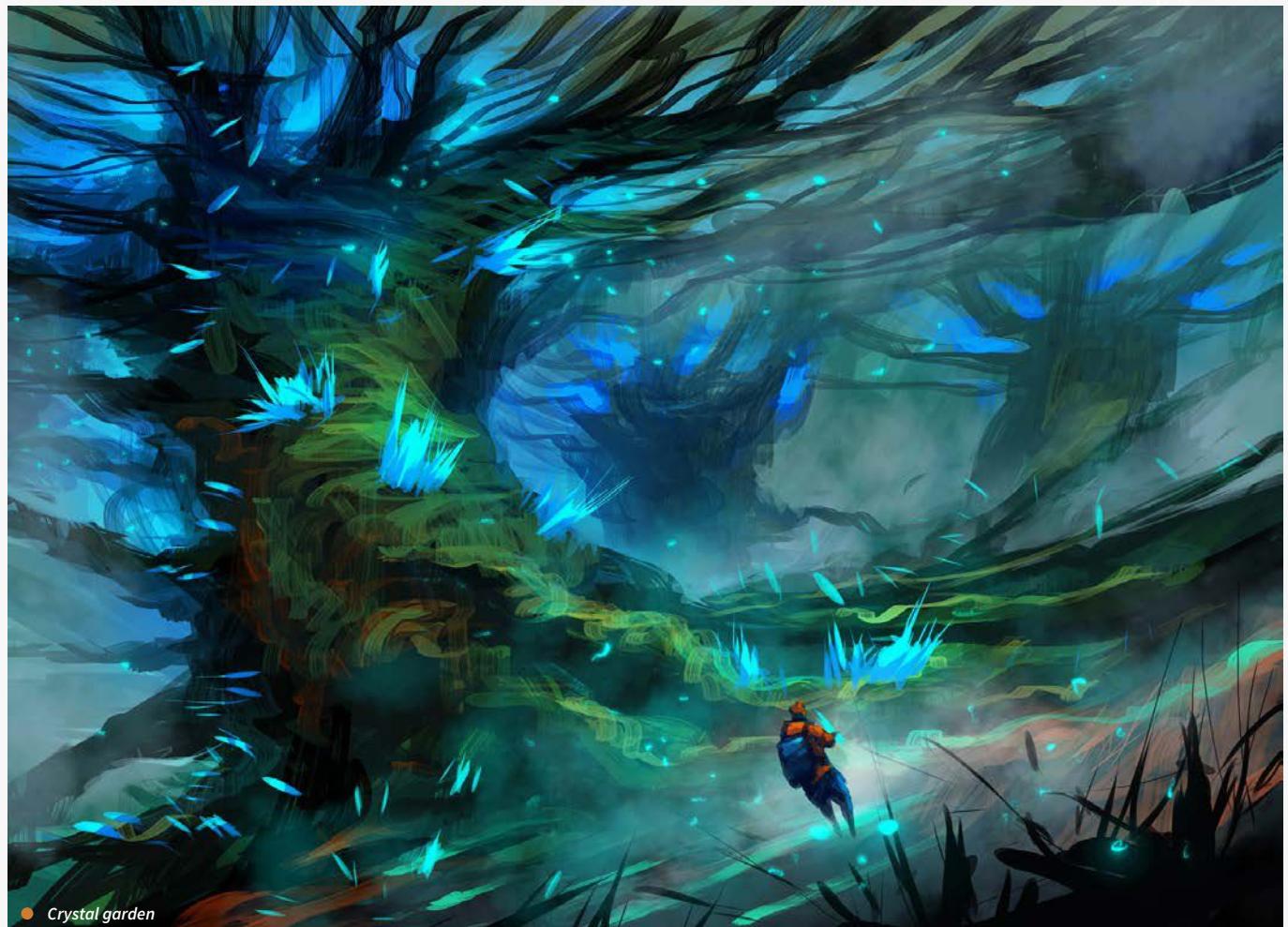
He first started drawing as a child when he would watch cartoons on television then practice drawing them himself. In 2010 he graduated with a Fine Arts degree in print making. Since his graduation he has created iPhone games and logo designs, and personal paintings.

He is largely self-taught as an artist, having learned his skills from the internet because of the limited opportunities to study digital art formally in Bangladesh. At first he just drew textures and sketches in Photoshop. A year later, he was working as a concept artist for games. Now his main career focus is on his graphic design work and digital art. In his spare time Afanur likes to practice speed painting, creating a world of bright colors and energetic movement. His accomplished speed paintings feature wide landscapes with deeply atmospheric lighting and color palettes. This month, Afanur shows 2dartist some of his incredible pieces... ▶

- *Balloon City* – each painting here is a 30-minute speed painting for a speed paint group

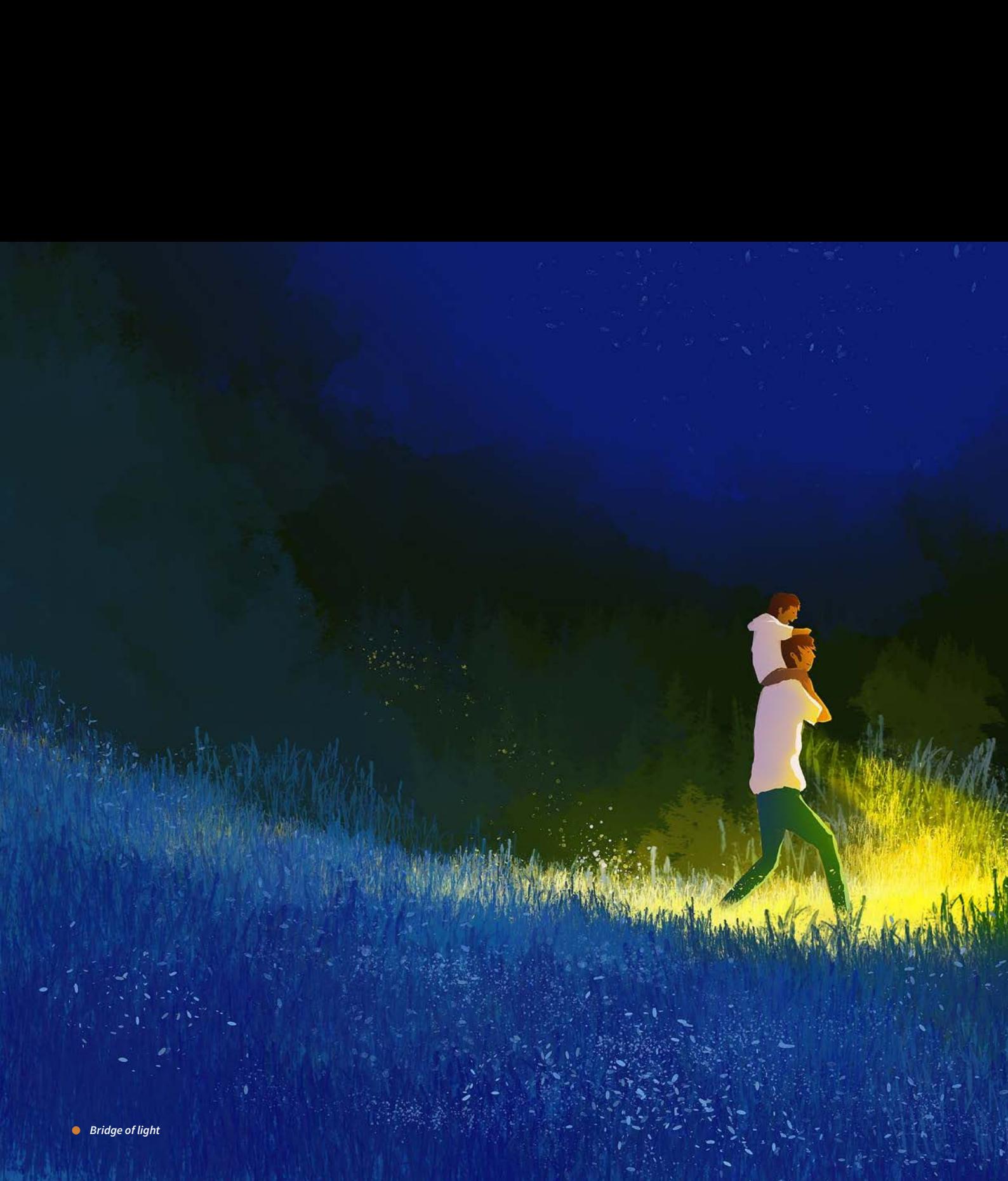


● *Crystal garden*

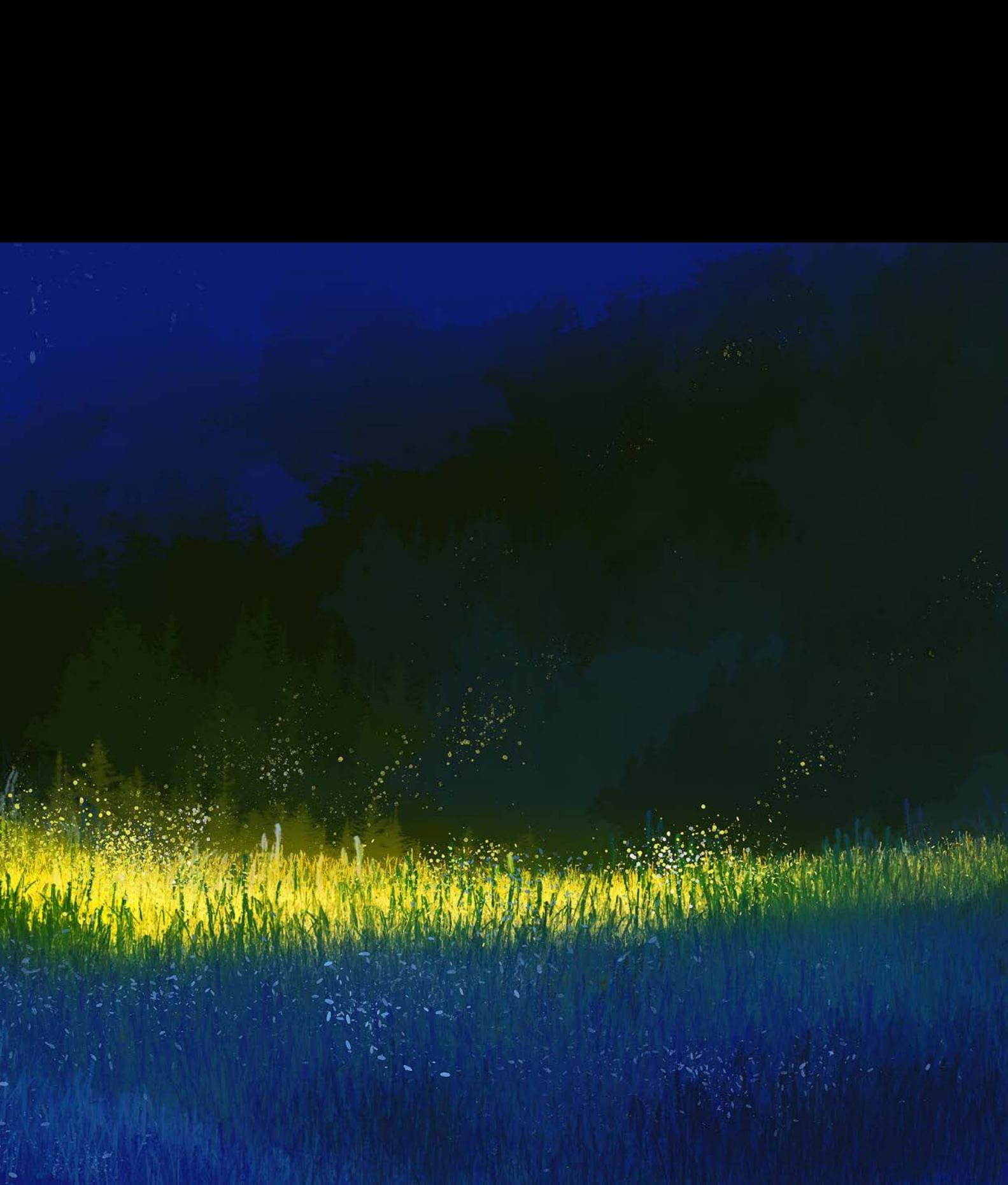




● Ghost dolphins



● Bridge of light



● Silent summer





2dartist: Hello Afanur! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

Afanur Rashid: First of all, I would like to thank 2dartist for giving me this opportunity. In 2007, I learned how to draw on my Wacom. Since learning this, I have never stopped practicing, and my knowledge of graphic design grew. Day by day, I improve myself and my work gets a new dimension.

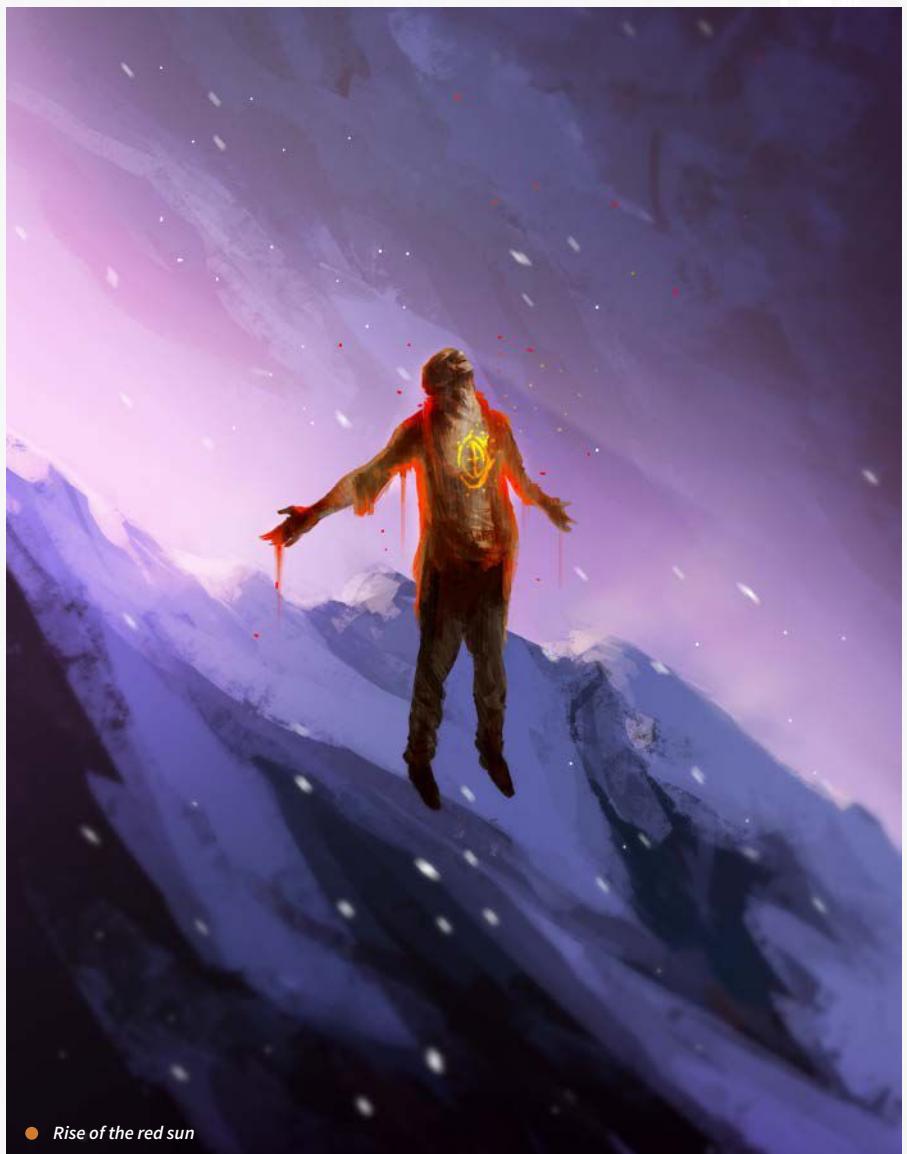
I became a concept artist when I started my first job creating iPhone games in 2008. Although I loved graphic designs, I wanted to build my career as a digital artist or concept artist. I have done many digital artworks for clients like posters, magazine cover design, and custom car designs and so on.

2da: What is it about speed painting that appeals to you so much?

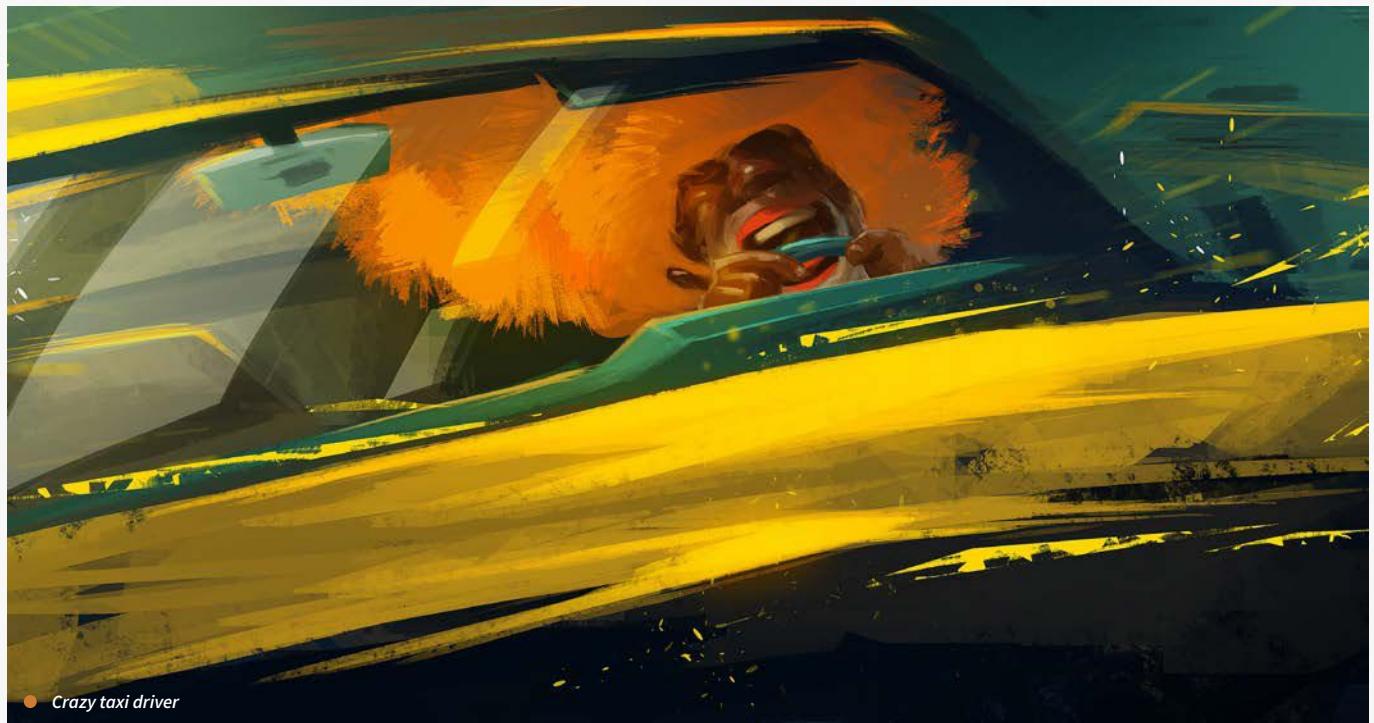
AR: For me, speed painting is a daily warm up in the middle of crowded projects. I have learned a lot of techniques from speed painting. Now I can make fast decisions and think fast for a concept design. It helps me a lot when dealing with my clients. When I get some big projects I can manage to show drafts with speed painting.

2da: In many of your artworks the color choices are very vibrant, what inspires these pieces?

AR: The galaxy, yes that has always inspired me. I can feel the color in my every painting; the Earth born from every piece of the galaxy and color. ▶



● Rise of the red sun



● Crazy taxi driver

● Wood eater demon



● Evil clown



I know of many great concept artists and illustrators with many different styles. I think it's your own individuality that stands out when people begin to know your style.

I always like vibrant colors because I think life is colorful. You only have one life so do something vibrant with it.

2da: How do you stop the colors from being muddied and dulled when you are working so quickly in your pieces?

AR: I didn't get such a good result when I first started doing speed painting. I had to practice a lot to get better. Once a week I open all the work I have done and try to discover my mistakes. I research all the resources I have used to find the middle-ground between real color and imaginary color. I try to minimize both colors to get a good result.

The most common mistake I see new artists make is that they are afraid to use colors. My suggestion is that you play with the colors and eventually you could get a good result.

2da: How do you capture the movement and energy of speed painting in your work, but without losing the accuracy?

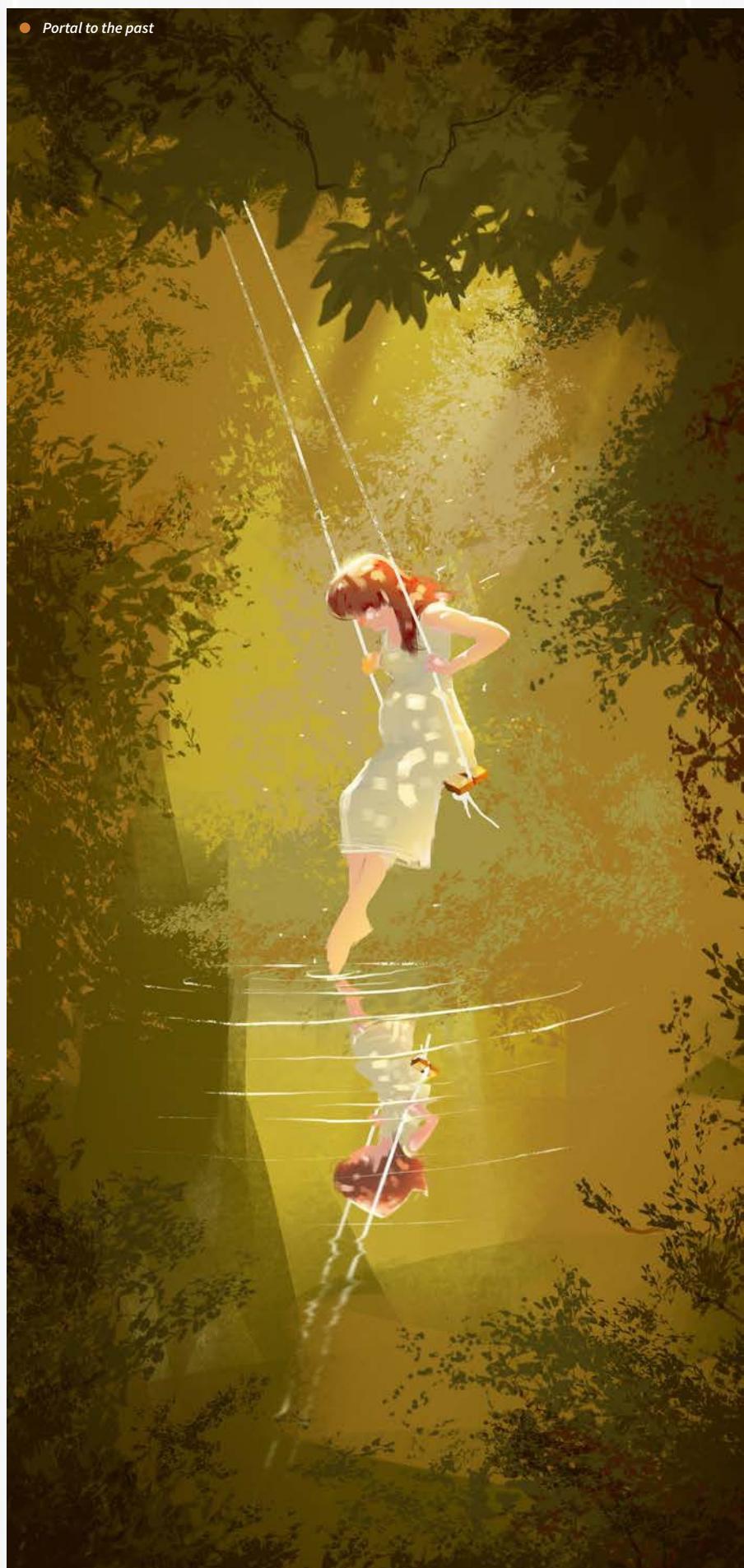
AR: The movement and energy comes from my sketchbooks. I try to do a daily drawing in my sketchbook. Some quick figure drawing helps me to capture the movement and energy of speed painting, which keeps my painting accurate.

It's very important to practice anatomy drawing. An emphasis on composition and perspective is also very important to speed painting. I do my sketchbook studies more on the details I want in my painting so that's why when I start my clock for speed painting I don't lose my accuracy.

2da: And finally, what is your advice for someone who wants to try speed painting but doesn't know where to begin?

AR: I believe that it is never too late to start something new. Although someone who wants to start speed painting will have to study some basic drawing. So start with your sketchbook. Draw anything you like. Then learn how to use some basic painting software, you don't need to learn everything. Don't be afraid to share your work with friends and social networks. Don't give up. ●

Thank you Afanur for chatting to 2dartist!



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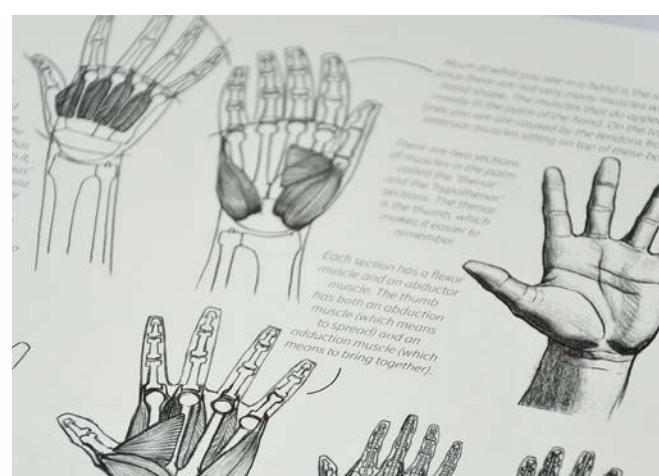
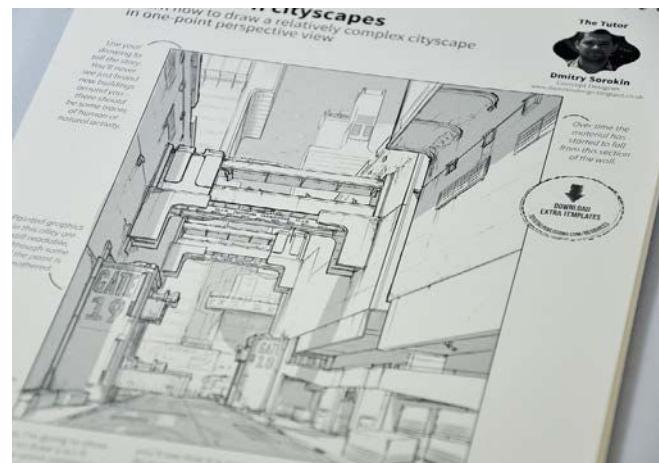
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The Artist



Christo Dagorov
christodagorov.com

Materials Used:
Traditional

Christo Dagorov is a Switzerland-based freelance artist. He has exhibited across Europe and in New York. Christo is currently working on drawings in silverpoint and goldpoint on paper.

T R A D I T I O N A L S P O T L I G H T

Minutely detailed drawings

Aspire to the intricacy of these meticulously drawn illustrations by Switzerland-based artist Christo Dagorov ▶

Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, Christo Dagorov has expanded his worldly reach across Europe and the US through his highly detailed traditional artworks. As a self-taught artist he has developed his own methods of working which have led Christo to produce a varied body of work, incorporating pencil drawings, furniture design, engravings and paintings. His recent series *Lips* comprises a collection of painstakingly drawn pencil illustrations on paper of lips, each with a twist. The series features lips drawn out of a forest, a map, a cage, even writhing human bodies. Each drawing has a symbolic title imbuing the images with meaning, consolidating Christo's intention to make work that is more than just 'nice pictures.'

Along with a selection of his other works, Christo shows 2dartist the fascinating *Lips* series and talks about his creative intentions, inspiration and choice of materials.

2dartist: Hello Christo! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself and tell us a little about your creative background and projects?

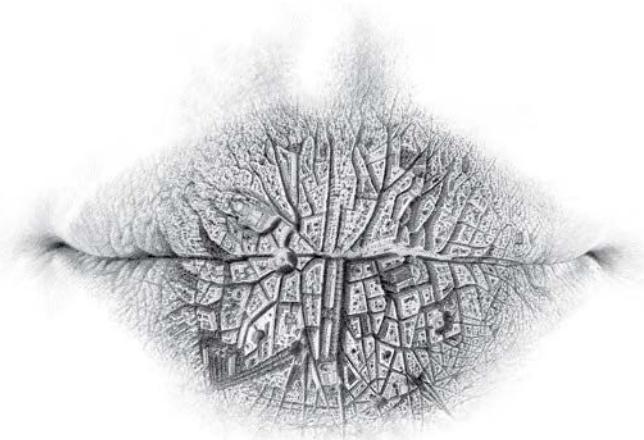
Christo Dagorov: Hello, you're welcome, and thank you for being interested in my work! I started to work as a freelance artist in 1989 after visiting some art schools (but I didn't finish one of them). I had, and still have, my own ideas which needed their own techniques.

Back then I had to find a reasonable answer to the question: Why should I do what I do? Without a good answer I would have stopped working as an artist immediately. Nothing less than making a contribution to the development of mankind is a central goal of my work and projects. Showing other points of view is important to my work as well, hopefully making an inspiring impact on the viewer's perception. Just making nice pictures doesn't interest me.

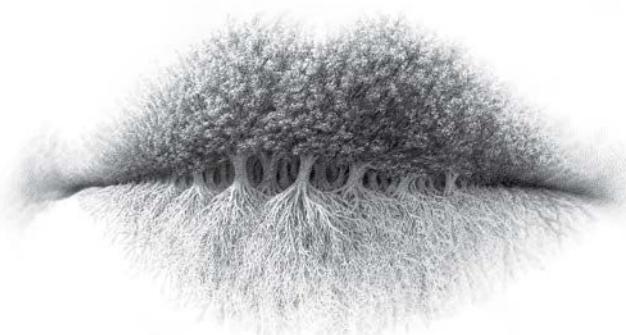
2da: You create some incredibly detailed and precise drawings, do you have any tips for maintaining accuracy in your work?

CD: Accuracy takes time. It's very important to spare no effort and not to lose patience. On the one hand I see it as a kind of meditation as I can't wait to see the finished work; on the other hand it helps me stay focused on going ahead. Therefore the challenge is to keep your patience and impatience balanced.

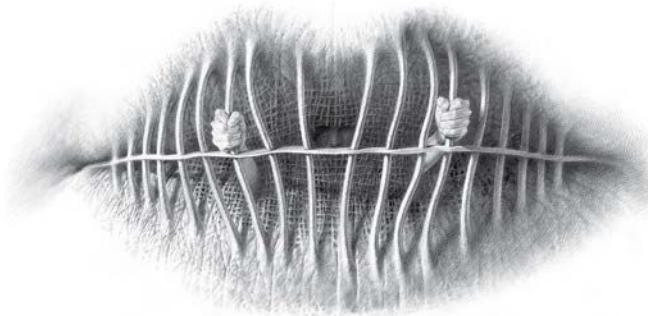
2da: Do you have any go-to places for inspiration when starting a new project? ▶



● Part of the *Lips* series showing a view of a city from above

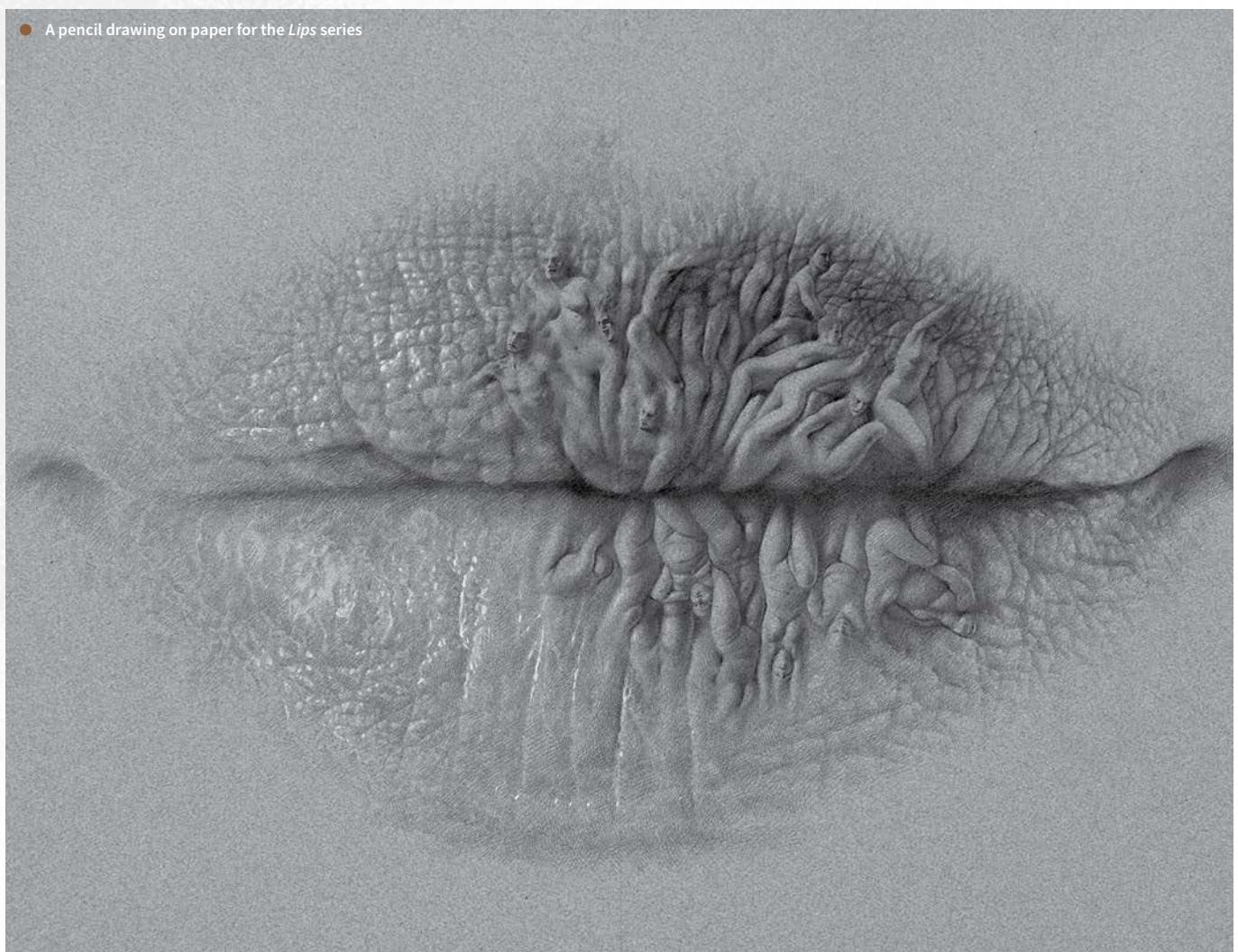


● From the *Lips* series; pencil on paper



● For the *Lips* series; pencil on paper

● A pencil drawing on paper for the *Lips* series



● For the *Skyline* series; acrylic on canvas

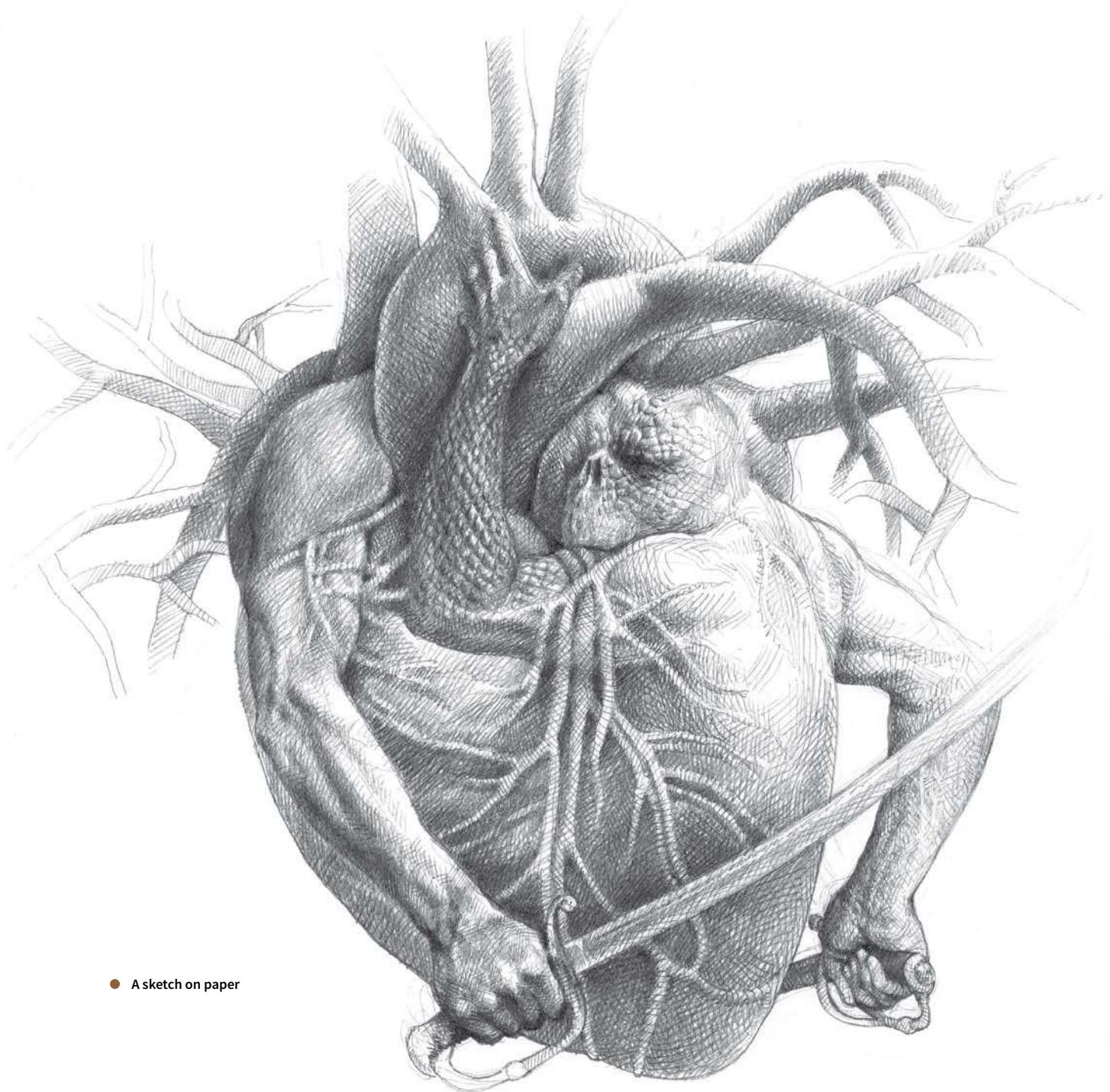


● Atoms 2 (to be or not to be)
– Silverpoint on paper





● Atoms 3 (*the birth of the cool*) – silver and goldpoint on paper



● A sketch on paper

△ X 1201
2014



● Watercolor on paper for the *Skyline* series

"Be fearless even if an idea seems like it is impossible to be implemented"

CD: No, there is no particular place. For me inspiration can happen everywhere at anytime. For example inspiration can happen while talking to a relative at a party, playing with my kids, watching a movie, or reading a book. The list goes on and on.

2da: Can you tell us a bit about your creative process? What tools do you use to see you from initial inspiration to the finished artwork?

CD: Somehow all my works are connected with each other. This means that when I am working

on one piece, I already have a couple of ideas in mind for the next one. And when it comes to finishing a piece I can imagine the following work very clearly.

2da: You often work on paper regardless of whether you are painting with watercolors or acrylics, or drawing with pencil. What is it about this material that is so preferable to you?

CD: Good question. Do I really prefer paper? Actually I like to change from time to time the materials I work with. For example, in 2002 I changed from working with acrylic on canvas to engraving sheet steel. I made a couple of big steel pictures until 2009 and after that I changed to pencil drawings on paper. Currently I'm working

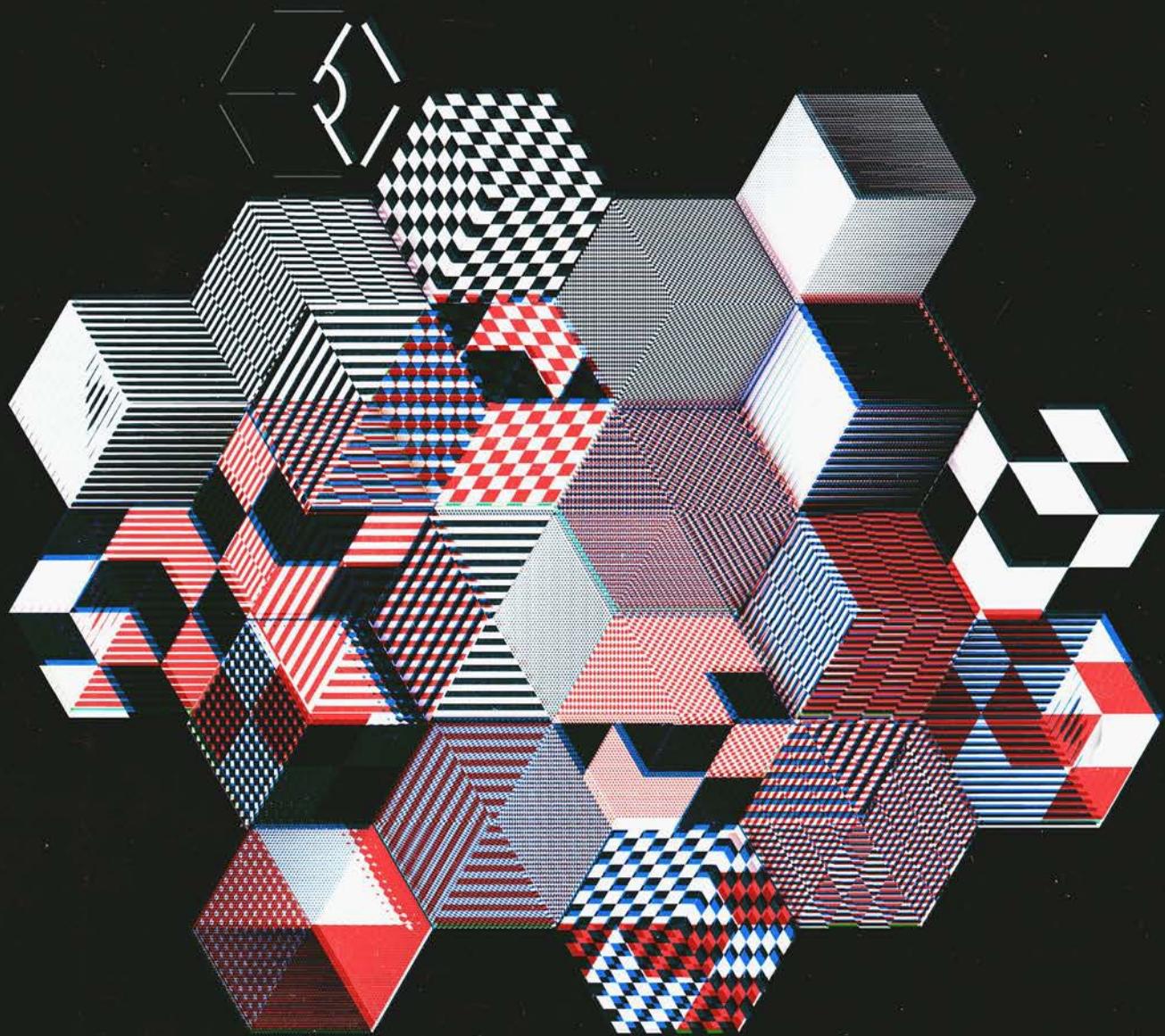
with silver- and goldpoint on paper, which is by the way an absolutely fantastic technique.

2da: And finally, do you have any tips or advice for our readers as to how they can improve their own drawing skills?

CD:

1. Practice.
2. Be fearless even if an idea seems like it is impossible to be implemented.
3. Relax.
4. Keep focused on your work.
5. Ensure you keep your self-criticism and self-praise balanced.

Thank you Christo for taking the time to speak to 2dartist! ●



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STEPHAN GÜNTHER

Sketchbook

Concept artist Stephan Günther shows us his highly original sci-fi sketches inspired by ruined places...

The Artist



Stephan Günther
stepke-illustration.
blogspot.co.uk

Stephan Günther is a concept artist, illustrator, and graphic designer based in Dessau, Germany.

SKETCHBOOK OF STEPHAN GÜNTHER

Uncover the inspirations behind these intuitive, story-telling pen-and-ink sketches...

Sketching keeps my imagination alive. A world without imagination is just a brown old hat. I understand sketching as a language for visual thinking, and it gives me a voice to share my imagination with others. Inspiring others, as well as being inspired by others, is a sense I love to share.

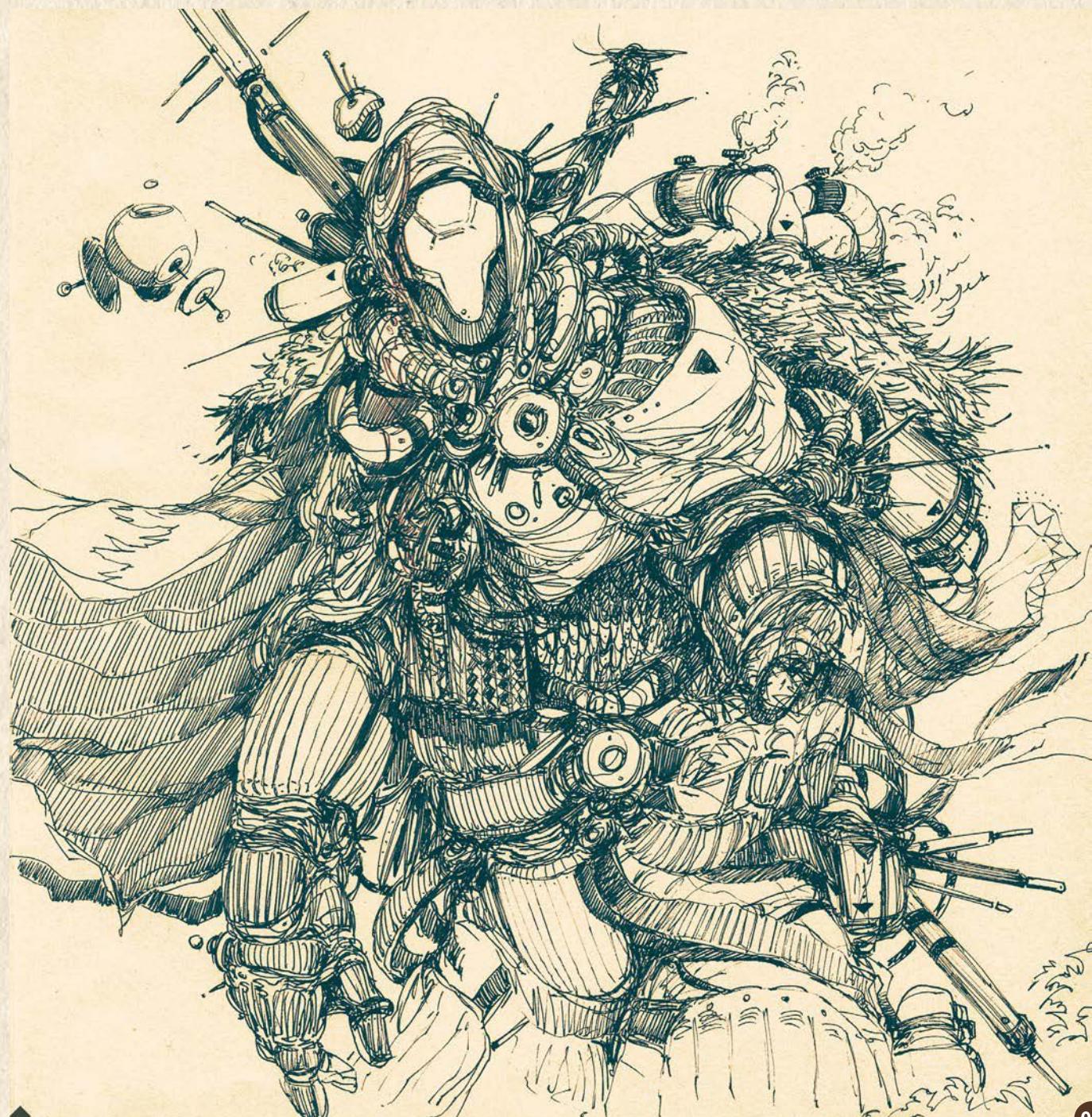
I've sketched since my childhood; since I could hold a pencil. I filled my schoolbooks with fantastic creatures and figures, caricatured

my classmates and teachers, and drew comics and pictures for my friends. I was inspired by the comics I read, the movies I watched, and the games I played, but also by my family, especially my mother. She draws and supported me in drawing. My brother and sister also share and support my fascination with drawing and design – we often created our own imaginative worlds and stories to play with.

I studied Media Design at the University of Applied Sciences, Mainz, before switching to Communication Design. I met like-minded fellows – illustrators, graphic designers, photographers, visual artists, animators,

filmmakers, programmers and game designers – who worked together on interdisciplinary projects. I learned to use sketching for developing concepts in different media productions, and it became an essential craft during my design process.

I must give thanks to Albrecht Rissler, who gave me my first artistic sketchbook and advised me to draw with a pen instead of a pencil, to risk the uncontrolled and permanent lines which would improve my line drawings. I'm also lucky for my conversations with the late character designer and cartoonist Harald Siepermann: he was the mentor who



01



showed me the way, how to create emotions in character design and visual storytelling with the simplicity of a line.

Inspiration and ideas

For my interest in sci-fi sketches, maybe the initial spark came from my fascination in the art and the storytelling of comics, novels, films, and games. However, I would much rather gain inspiration from the world surrounding me; from what is touching me. I like to take inspiration from what I see, hear, feel, smell, and taste – being aware of my environment and the people I'm living with. Sometimes these impressions are reflected in my

dreams, which I find can also be a lively source of inspiration for my imagination.

Inspiration can find you everywhere. I live in a small countryside town surrounded by shire landscapes, with rivers, green meadows, and forests. From time to time I take a walk and observe nature while I let my thoughts roam. In the nearby town you can find ruined buildings, wild gardens, and old factories. These ruined places are like rusty treasure boxes, where I discover extraordinary materials and references which may tell a story. The industrial architecture is an outstanding contrast to organic nature.

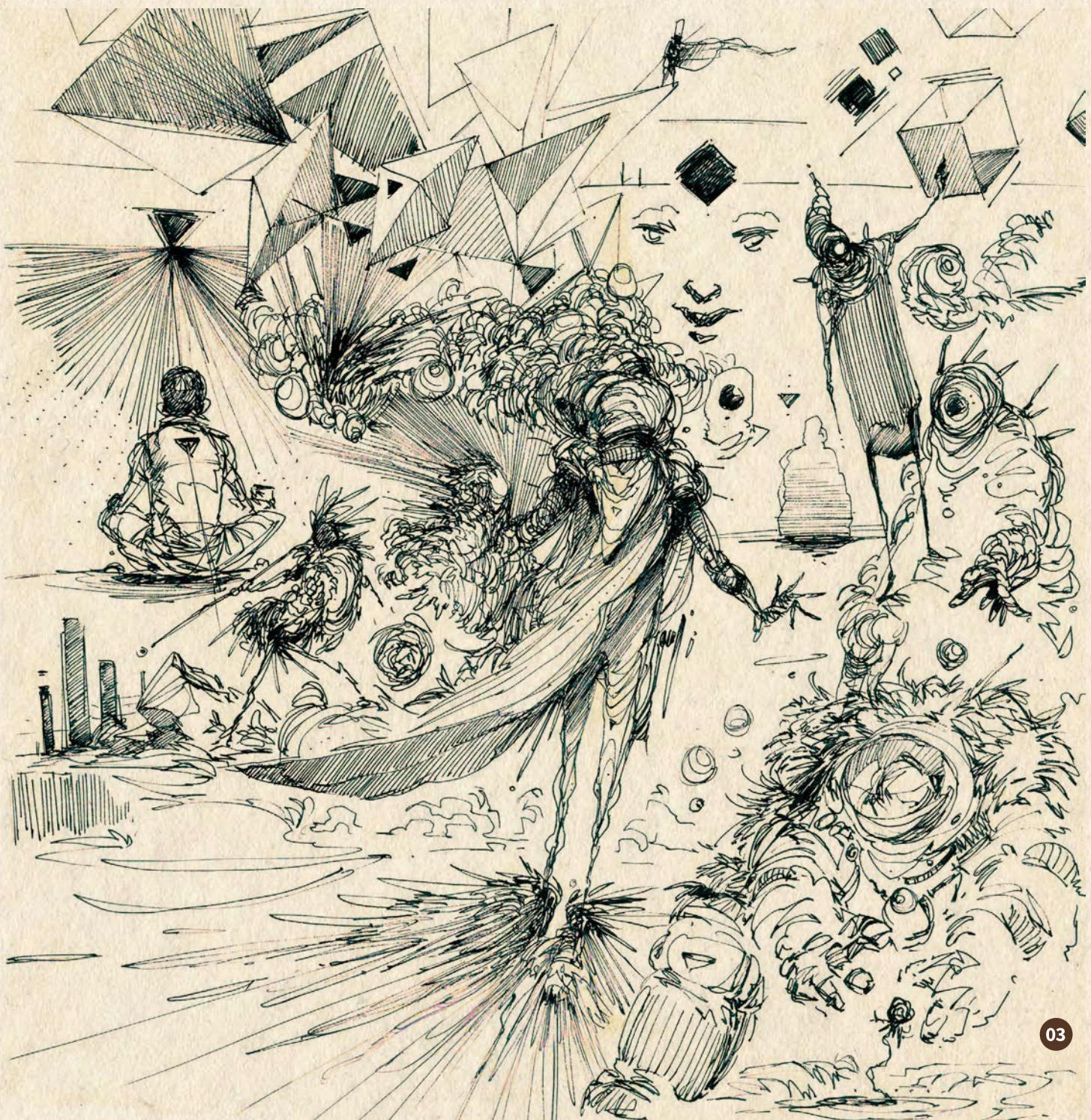
Those contrasts create suspense, which I like to keep in my visual worlds.

Materials

I sketch traditionally with a ballpoint pen. I also draw with a brush pen with colored ink, and ▶

01 A sketchbook drawing. Pen is permanent and I have to accept accidents and mistaken lines, which are very welcome because they're lively and charming

02 A sketchbook page



watercolor pencils for adding colors, shading, and textures. I like the variety of the brush pen line to create different textures – hair, fur, feathers, or wooden surfaces.

The paper I use has a natural white tone, creating a harmony with the tones of gray pencil or black ink. The paper weight is heavy enough to handle ink and watercolors. I build and test my own sketching tools with things I find – wire, wood, feathers, textiles, paper, etc. and combine materials like chalk, coal, ash, spices, tea, and coffee. At the moment my favorite technique is

to ink with a wooden skewer and plastic Kinder Surprise egg capsules. It's always exciting to experiment with different materials and methods. I'm excited for what's coming next.

Sketching techniques

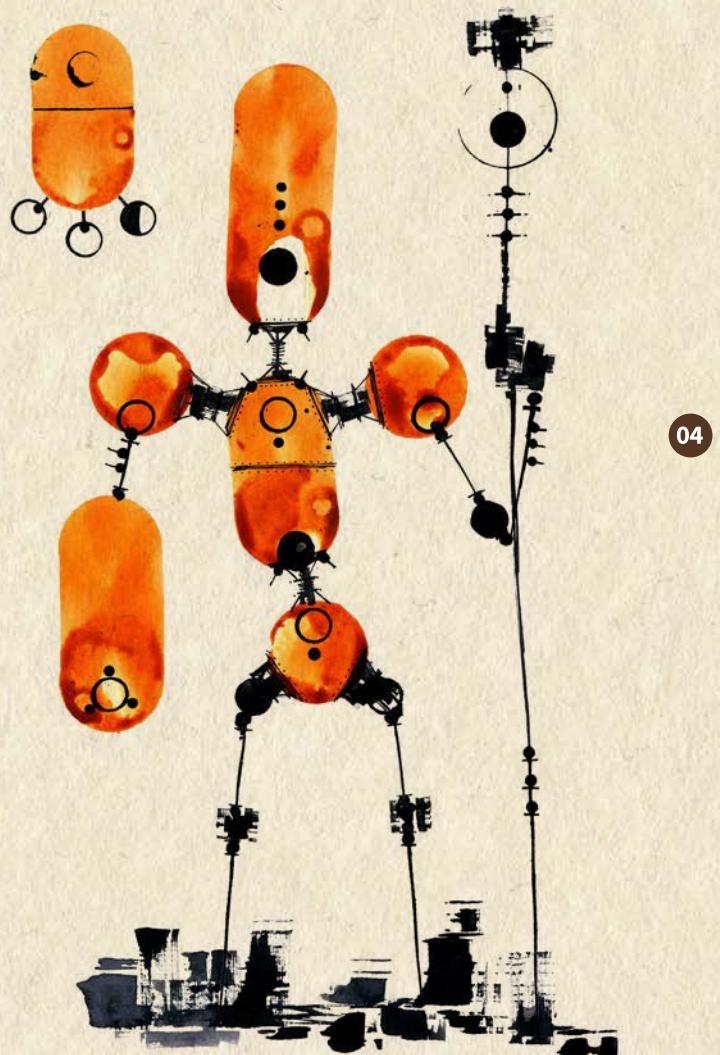
I sketch by following my intuition, just going for an aesthetic sense, visualizing an emotion or an idea. It's not so much about the result, but about the way of doing it.

By sketching intuitively, sketching itself becomes a source of inspiration. In some ways it's an

Odyssey, starting at a familiar point and taking a step forward to something unknown, overcoming obstacles and hurdles, exploring some unexpected lines and shapes which enlighten my aesthetic sense and enrich my visual library.

I see my sketchbooks like mobile laboratories, wherein I collect impressions and experiment with drawing materials and methods.

Scrolling through the pages feels like strolling through a library, randomly picking out a book and reading a forgotten dream-note. ●



project • capsule • the robots

© Stephan Günther



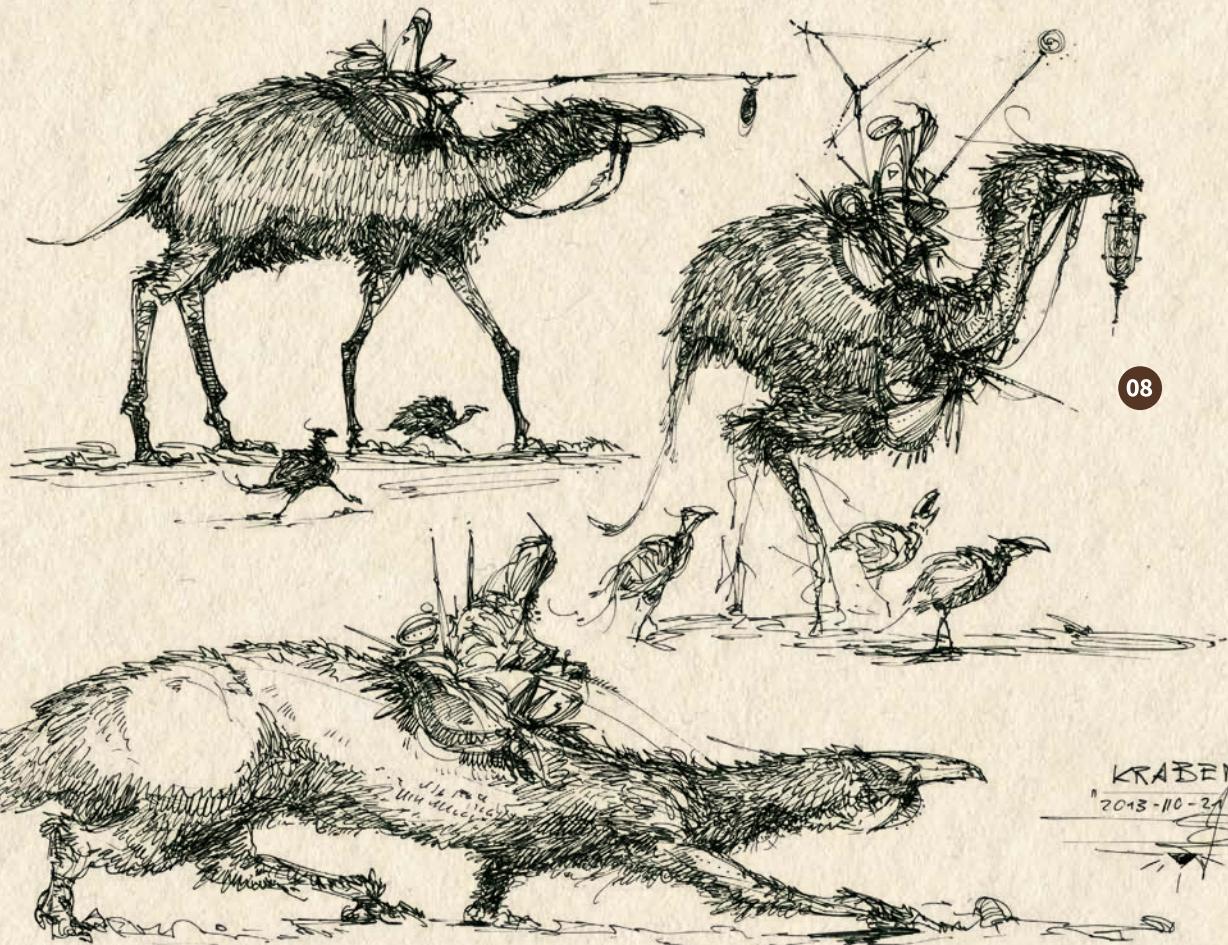
05

03 Ballpoint pen is a quick tool to let the line flow over the paper; without lifting the pen, the drawing seems to be one endless line of loops and curves

04 A drawing from my *Capsule Robot* series

05 A character sketch of a grandpa





06 A personal character sketch

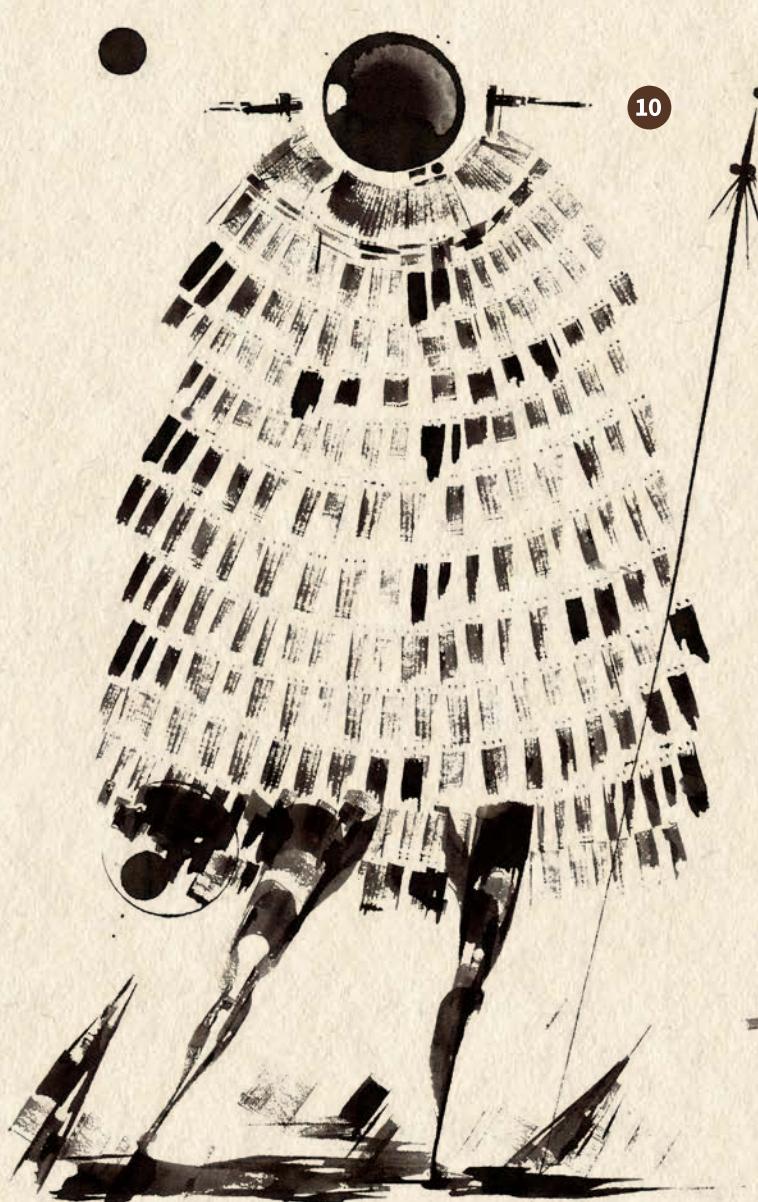
07 Development sketches for a creature

08 More development sketches for a creature

09 A warm-up sketch of a mech



09



10 – 12 A selection of sketches from
my *Signo Malhela* series

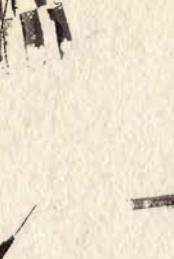
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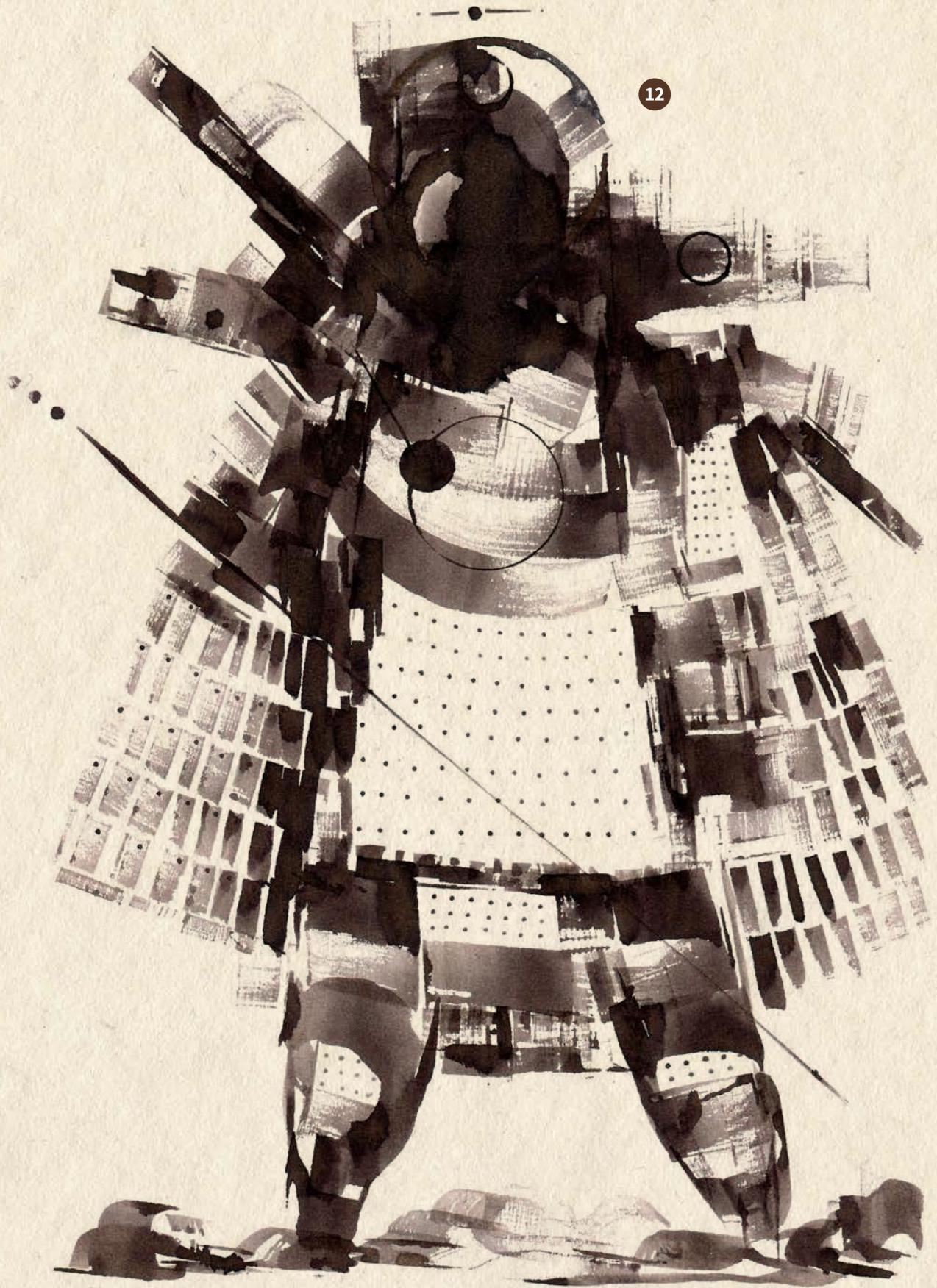


⚡ PRO TIP

Finding inspiration

A smart person told me, we don't need to go far away to get inspiration. The best ideas are right in front of us – we just have to learn to see and be aware. Sometimes the best ideas come when I wash the dishes. I don't think you can force finding inspiration, but you can create boundaries of space and time in which you are more open-minded so inspiration can find you.







13 A personal sketch of an astronaut

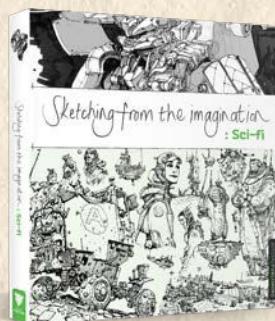
14 Another concept drawing of an astronaut
for my project MOON





15 A personal sketch

16 Another personal sketch



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Star Citizen concept artist Gurmukh Bhaisi shares an insight into his 3D designs and experience of the videogame industry

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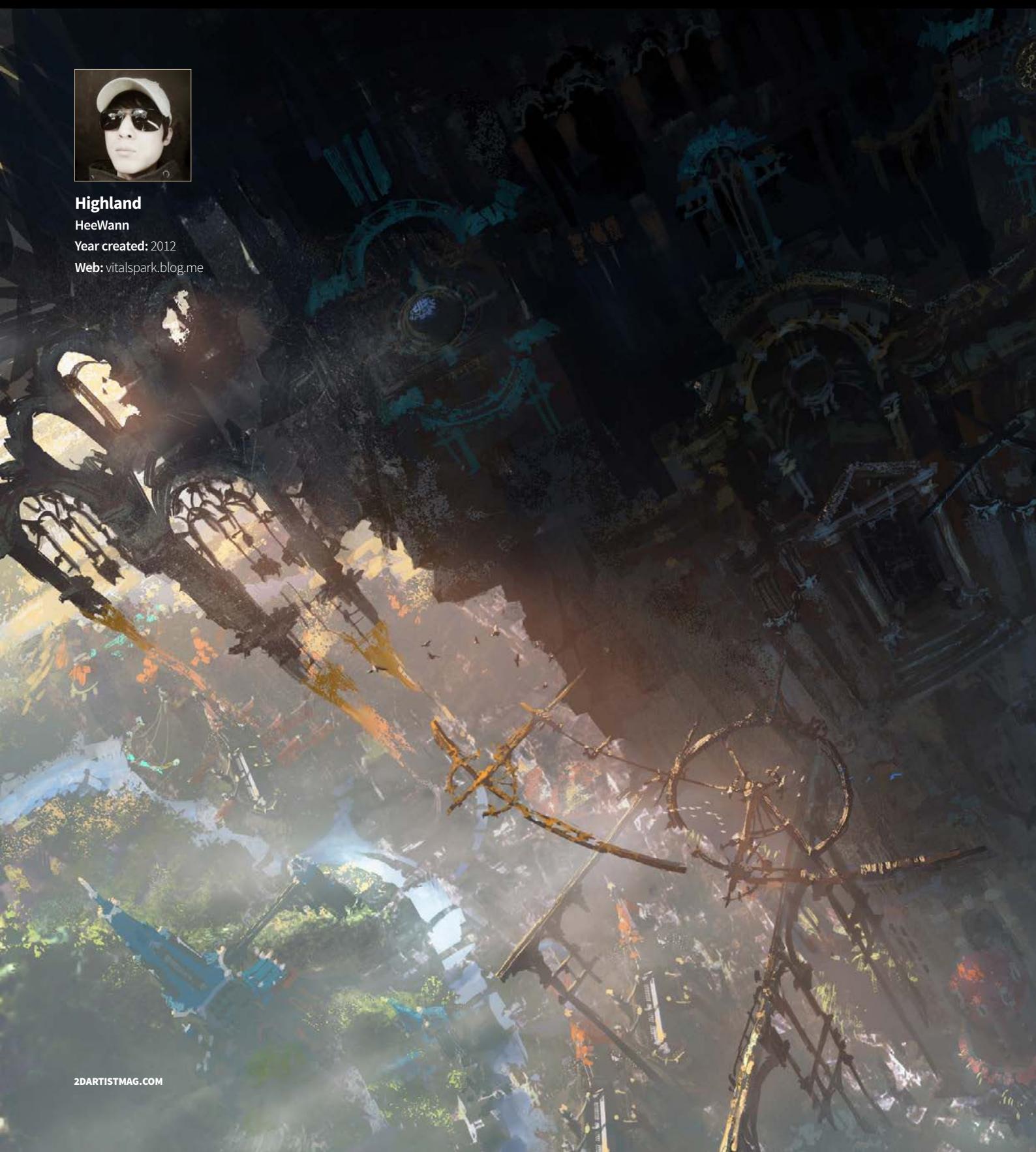


Highland

HeeWann

Year created: 2012

Web: vitalspark.blog.me



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Altered State

Pat C Presley

Year created: 2015

Web: phattro.com

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Post-apocalyptic mech

Asim Steckel

Year created: 2015

Web: artstation.com/artist/asim





Violet Sunset

Hernan Flores

Year created: 2015

Web: hernanfloresart.wix.com/hernanflores





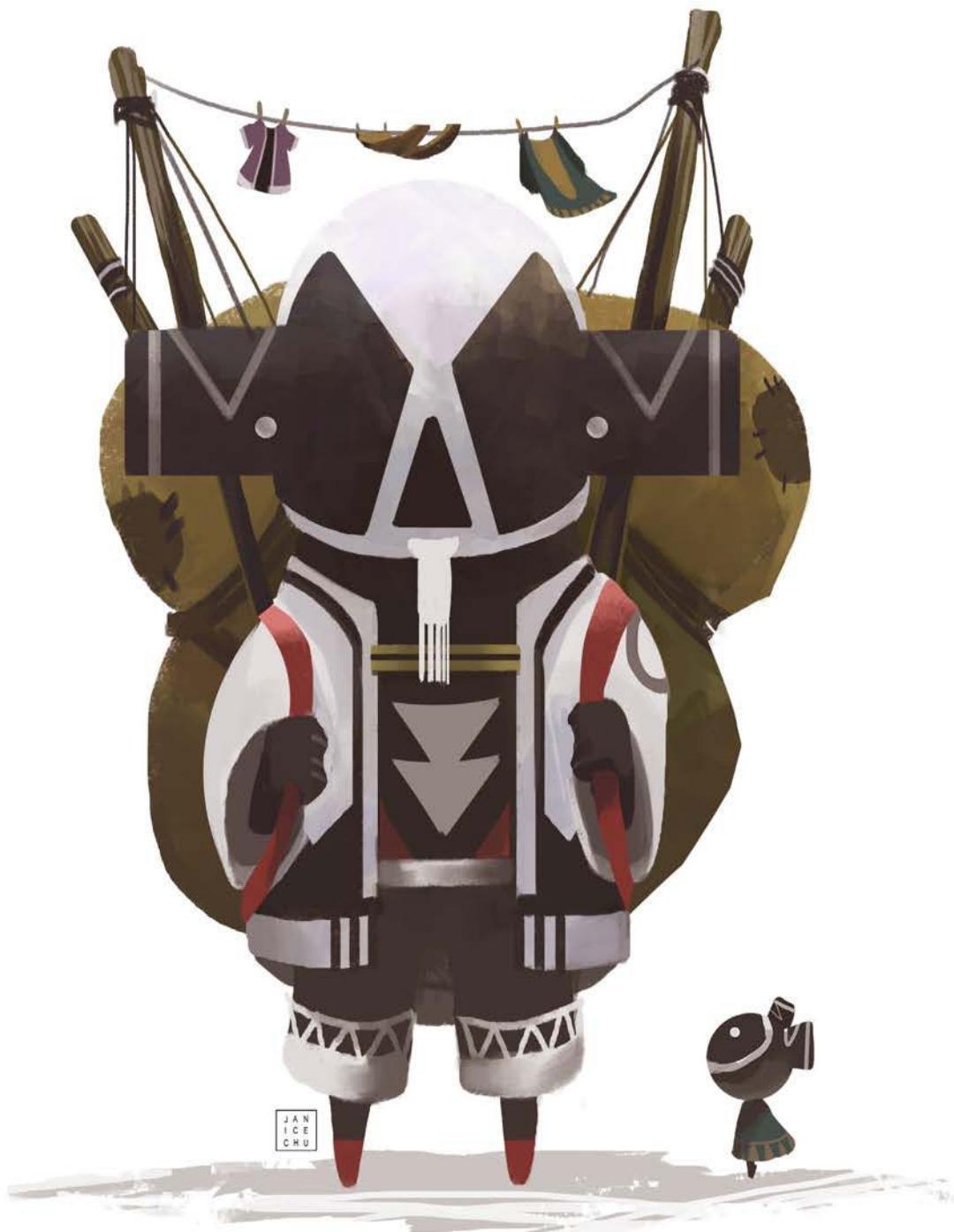


Travelling Sheep Merchant

Janice Chu

Year created: 2015

Web: www.artstation.com/artist/klangoda





GLADIATOR

PARODI

Year created: 2014

Web: artstation.com/artist/parodi







Three Pistons Lodge

Juhani Jokinen

Year created: 2014

Web: artofjokinen.com

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Beached

Lewis Henderson

Year created: 2015

Web: lewishendersonart.com





Grave Walls

Mert Genccinar

Year created: 2015

Web: mertgenccinar.daportfolio.com







Shuffle Boy

Amir Zand (San)

Year created: 2014

Web: amirzand.tumblr.com



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VIBRANT SPEED PAINTINGS

Freelance artist Afanur Rashid shows us his stunning speed paintings drawn from detailed sketches in 30 minutes or less

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The Artist



Efflam Mercier

efflammmercier.com

Software Used:

Photoshop

Efflam Mercier is a freelance concept artist and creative consultant based in Paris, working for film and games companies. He enjoys experimenting with different processes, telling stories with mood and lighting.



Create a successful concept design

Incorporate 2D and 3D techniques to make a functional robot concept with this in depth tutorial by the film and videogame artist Efflam Mercier



See how you can design a detailed concept character to impress your clients...

I want this tutorial to cover the creative design process that I started using for personal and freelance projects. It's very hard to get a creative result while still maintaining a highly reliable 'don't get fired' output at work. Either you're not emotionally involved in the project and the paintings or designs look bland like some kind of homework, or on the contrary, you just let the fun guide you and forget about your client's needs and project structure.

I'm going to take you through this process while designing and rendering a humanoid robot concept. I'll be going over initial sketching, composition sketches, problem solving through research, front and side-view designs, then projecting that onto simple 3D geometry in Blender as a base for a batch of Photoshop concepts showcasing the design in relation to the character's story.

I believe it's important to try to narrow the goal of the images you want to create. There are images that are impressive and epic, some that are intimate and captivating, and some are beautiful and contemplative. Some images tell an interesting story or are thought provoking, some simple, abstract, functional, or believable. There are quite a few of these goals to explore, but the important thing is to pick the area you are interested in, you can't have it all!

Here I'm going to place some details and elements on and around the design that are going to make the audience search for a back story, but you can create a totally different design using this brief and process, follow along and create your own!

01 Sketch exploration of the brief: This step only applies for personal projects as most clients have super detailed briefs; even for blue-sky design they have a back-story or a 'dos and don'ts' list. I start with traditional sketches

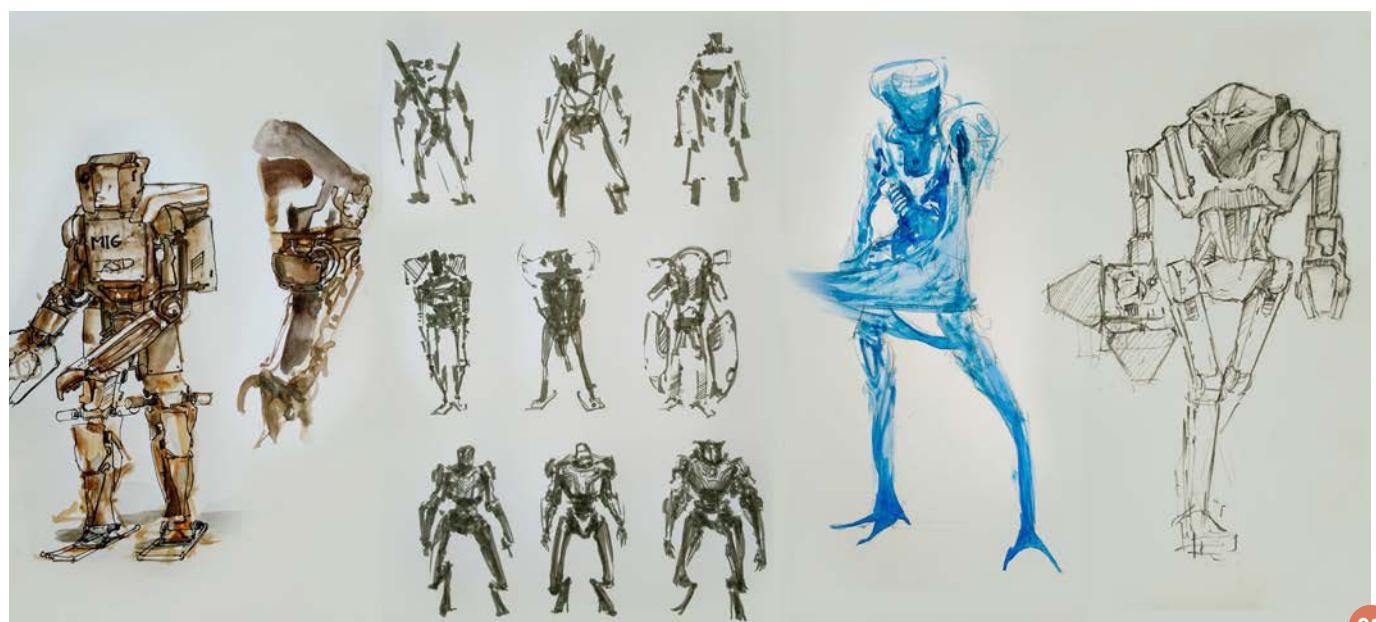
just because it's fun and fresh, you're just pulling things off your imagination.

Now the question is, 'what kind of robot do I want to design?' as you can have an industrial, metal-welding robot, an advanced blue alien robot, an evil iron killer robot, or what about an ancient guardian robot? In this step I have fun with any techniques or medium, it's all about exploring the different possibilities!

02 Narrow the brief: In this step I'm adding a context to my design, 'Ancient guardian robot'; I consider how ancient it is. What ▶

01 Exploring the brief and making proportion variations on the same design to test it out

02 Focusing on the brief with extra sketches to make the robot look huge, and also to make it clear that he belongs to the temple



01



02



03



04

kind of civilization engineered it? What was it guarding? Is it still active?

So by asking these questions I have an idea for a gigantic ancient guardian robot that has protected a derelict, overgrown temple for centuries. I imagine it has recently been repurposed by another human civilization, which uses the robot's incredible strength to help them carry a large amount of fish (or gold?) from the river to the village.

Once I have this refined brief, I start doing these composition sketches with a brush pen.

03 Research anatomy, style and culture:

Drawing anything from the imagination often comes with the problem of relying on

design shortcuts; mixing and matching some *Pacific Rim*, *Iron Man*, a bunch of games I've played, and *Castle in the Sky* and so on. To me, a good design is like making a good soup, you need raw ingredients for that; you can't just mix a bunch of microwave soups and expect anything good to come from it.

Real world reference and understanding are your key ingredients, choose them carefully! I look through photos from the DARPA Robotic Challenge, analyzing how each team approached the same task with unique solutions.

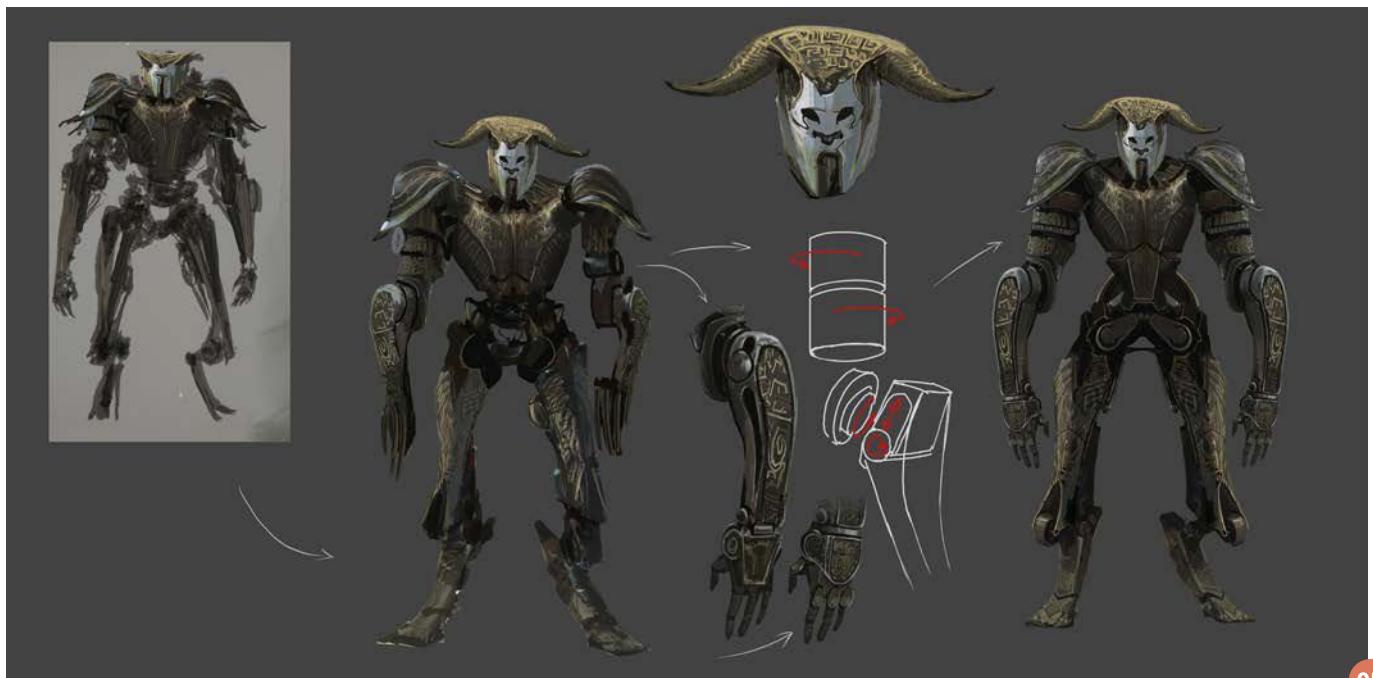
I'm not an engineer, so just like I wouldn't map every single muscle of the human body before drawing it; I try to simplify the robot in gesture and structure in these sketches.

I then begin to think about style. Usually once humans master a technology, they start to style it, engraving, and embossing like on Italian 18th-Century plate armors. Sometimes a shell is added to hide or cover up the functional parts.

When searching for references, I don't write 'temple' or 'armor' in Google, as you will always get the same over-used refs. Instead try bouncing around from link to link, but start with a country for example. You will be surprised how much unique stuff you can discover! I need engraving details, ornament, shape variations; the Mingun Bell is a great inspiration for a simple but massive wood and metal structure.

04 Prototype:

In this step I'm going to do a very quick prototype of the design with a



rough collage and painting to see what problems I will need to solve later on.

I'm working on one or two layers very simply, copying a part and mirroring it for symmetry. Something that helps me design quicker is to design the shapes in flat colors, then roughly add the shading on top with any brush that has a transfer set to 'pen pressure'. I default changing the brush size to the > and < keys, and I'm hitting them constantly to give the painting a cool sketchy look.

05 Design: Our brain always tricks us into thinking our ideas are awesome and make so much sense. As I confront the rough sketch to draw a more refined design state, I see

all the 'blurry design' areas. I need to go in and describe what it is, what it is made out of, and what it does.

For example, fig. 05 shows a golden embossed, ornate upper leg armor piece. It covers up the mechanisms and is connected to the knee joints, it has a cut in the middle to slide it around and change the walking configuration. It's simpler than it seems!

06 Variation: Once I have created a pretty defined design, I can very quickly make some variations. I select different parts with the Lasso tool and move, scale, and rotate them around, painting inside the silhouette with 'lock transparent pixels.' ▶

03 References of Ancient Yemen architecture, the Mingun Bell, and Qing dynasty artifacts all help to style the robot

04 Create a sketchy look for the prototype by constantly changing the brush size as you work

05 Don't forget to look at your sketches, they capture the essence of the design; your initial intent!

06 By transforming or changing color, you get more options for you or your client, and it can only take 10 minutes!

What if the head is bigger but the legs longer? What about covering the lower-body with mud from the river? The changes are subtle but can totally change the feeling of a design. I'll keep the original design because it feels more balanced.

A great tip is using Edit > Content-Aware Scale. You can make some pretty funky distortions and find new design ideas!

07 Presentation:

It's always important to know how to showcase your designs in a more photo-real style.

Here is a trick: I paint everything with rather flat lighting, like an overcast day, with soft occlusion shadows – not only does it make the design process more manageable because the lighting is uniform, but when it comes to painting in the light it becomes a piece of cake. The only thing I have to do is paint gray with a Soft brush and set the layer to Multiply. You can see in fig. 07 where I place the shadows on the opposite side to the light. I decide to paint the light coming from screen-left, painting a light gray color with a color dodge layer.

08 Blender 3D block-out model:

This is an optional step, but it makes any



07



08

illustrations using this design VERY fast. By the way Blender is free (and awesome).

The idea is that I plot out the basic volumes from the front view using a background image, very roughly modeling with extrusions, edge-loops (Ctrl+R), and adding in cubes (Shift+A) in edit mode. Once the volumes are modeled, I add a plane behind the model scaled exactly like the

background image. Then using front projection with 'scale to bounds' turned on, I get the painting projected onto the mesh, creating an illusion of a very refined model.

09 Collage and integration rendering:

Once I have the 3D model, it is easy to pose the robot like my initial sketch by rotating the limbs, then placing sunlight, and rendering

it out with Cycles. When I heard my parents were traveling to Bali, I bought them a new camera. A few weeks later they came back with 40GB of awesome references, and I used some of them directly as a base to build up the environment and props, plus some old 3D render for the foreground trees.

When manipulating photos, perspective warp and puppet warp in Photoshop are very useful.

10 Fog and integration rendering:
Atmospheric lighting and fog is still quite slow to render in 3D, so if you can output a Z-depth pass (gradient with near white, and far away black) it can be super useful to paint in some fog. You can also use an ID pass where all the objects are rendered in flat individual color,

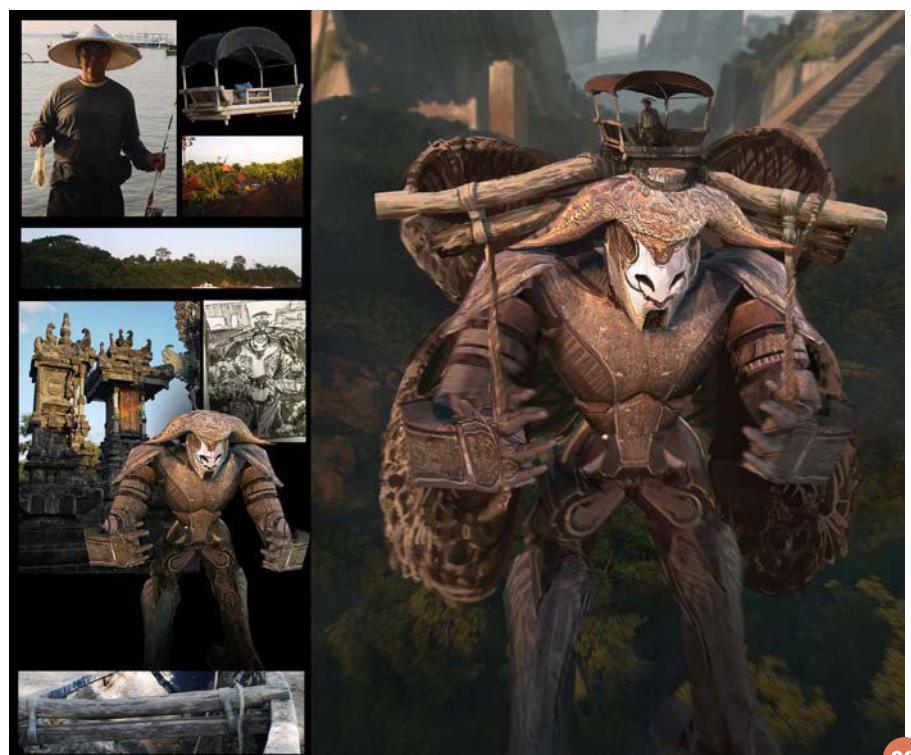
07 Now that it shines, add the cherry on top of the cake: chromatic aberrations, grain, glow, and color correction
08 Additionally, go one step further and create a basic shade mixing diffuse, reflection, spec and bump mapping
09 Put the most contrast on the robot's face so that it's clear he's the focus of the image
10 Create depth by repeating the robot figure three times over, using the closest one as a 'picture frame' like in cinema

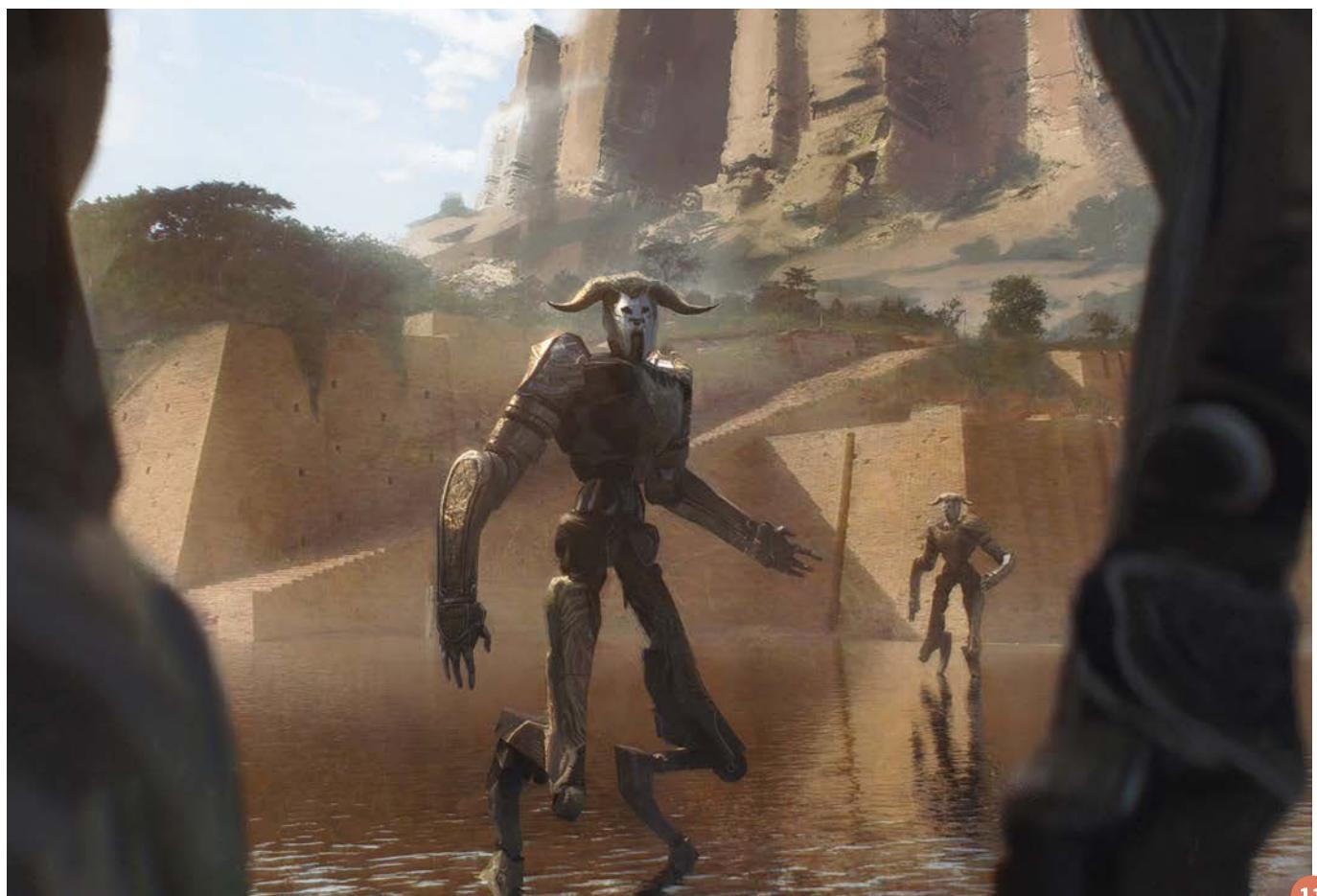


PRO TIP

Experimenting with techniques

As soon as I have the time free, I install new software, watch tutorials, and test new techniques. With each new thing I learn, I make a piece leveraging this newly acquired skill. Most of my portfolio is comprised of pieces using a new process, a new trick. Once I have learned it and applied it once, I move on. Working this way I keep the techniques ready at hand. For example I used two new techniques while doing this tutorial: Magic Bullet PhotoLooks for all the color grading, finishing and optical effects, and the Blender Orthographic UV Projection technique that I showed earlier on.





11

so you can select with magic wand. Here I realize I forgot about the depth so I'll do it manually.

I add three layers of fog, varying the opacity depending on the depth that I want to achieve. This trick is inspired by Disney's multiplane camera from 1937, which was used later on in digital compositing.

11 Killing the 3D look: I rarely leave an image as pure 3D, even in full CG films there is a lot of compositing involved to remove the 3D look. By painting on a few darker and lighter layers with 'color dynamics' switched on in the brush settings, I give a color vibration to flat areas.

This makes it look just like the image was entirely constructed with strokes of varying colors. I sometimes go to the channels and do Filter > Distort > Ripple on the blue channel.

One thing I also like to do is a copy merge of the layer (Ctrl+Shift+Alt+E). I then set the layer to Lighten blending mode, and use a Gaussian blur on it.

12 Scale and context: Now that I have created the robot concept with its own story and context, it's quite straightforward to

PRO TIPS

Ask for help

By receiving messages everyday asking for help on a piece, I started noticing the way people asked and how I was more or less inclined to spend time explaining or doing a paintover. So I have a few general tips if you want help from an artist that you like.

Firstly, never show your work just for the sake of showing it. It is better to wait a couple days after completing a piece, and if you are willing to improve it but have no idea how, then send it. Secondly, be specific in what you ask. For example ask how you would go about improving the lighting, scale or colors of this piece to get awesome tips.

Art events and knowing the field

It's extremely important to research about the industry you want to work in, may it be games, VFX, or feature animations. You have to know the market. Who are the major players, what are they looking for, what's the cutting edge tech, where is the industry moving, and so on?

Art events are a great way to know more about this. Not only will the speakers give lots of industry insights in the talks, but you will also learn a lot from talking to attendees. Whatever the ticket price, go for it! Top events to attend in 2015 include THU, IFCC and Industry Workshops.

generate many paintings. This is especially true when you have the Z-depth pass at hand to make selections using Select > Color range.

Painting is a lot to do with the picture I'm trying to create and less about the techniques I'm using.

It's very often about creating areas of contrast that describe shape and form, smoothly leading to the focal point without overpowering it. The painting can be very 'loose' if your thinking is 'tight' by comparison, I simply duplicate the ship around and scale it up!

13 **Overview:** Okay, now let's look back at the process: sketches, function and aesthetics references, prototyping, clean design, variations, presentation, 3D block-in, and finally creating renderings showing the design in his story context or environment.

With this process I don't get one painting, I get a 'concept design', and that interests art directors A LOT. I was always asked to make process breakdowns in job interviews and I didn't have anything solid. When it's the case that the art directors ask you to pass an art test, with a solid process, they might not be asking for the test at all, it's all about showing that you know where you're going when designing something.

14 **Get inspired!** Now I'd be thrilled to have you try out this process and have fun creating a concept design, as I said earlier it can be any robot, just try to develop your idea using this template. ●

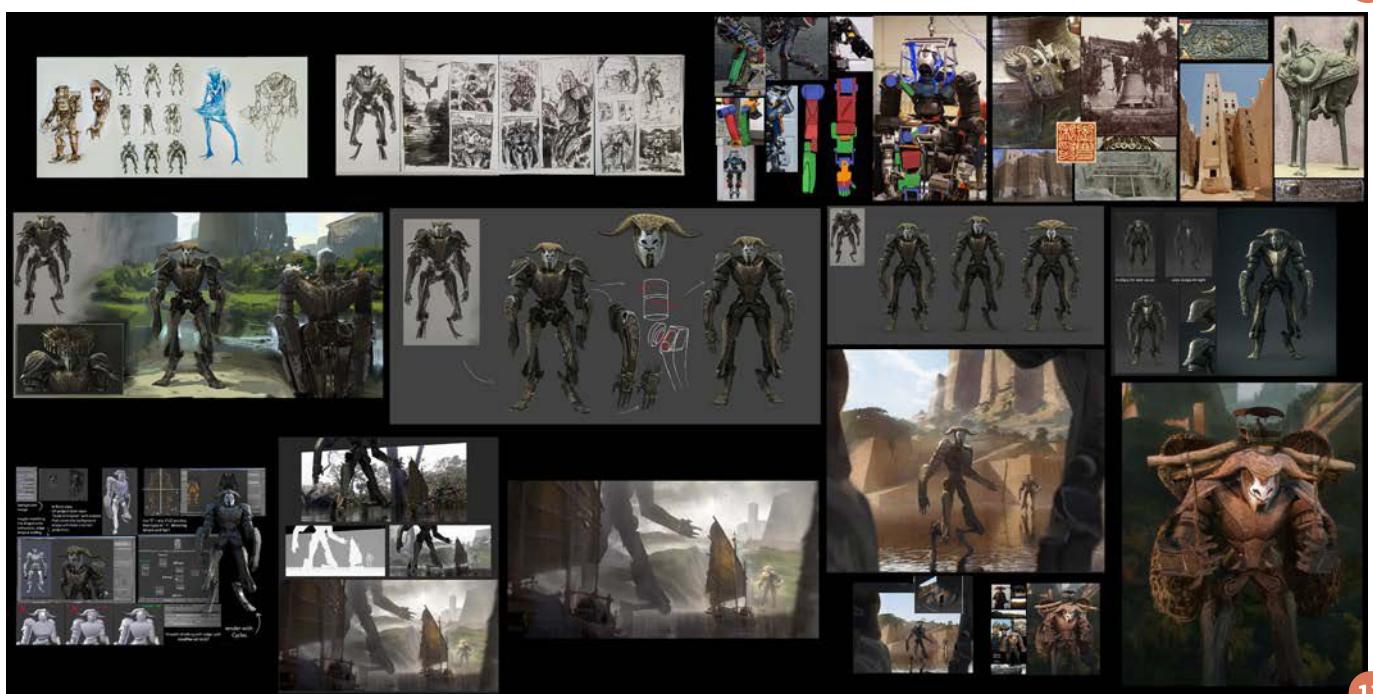
11 Centuries later, these robots are still protecting the long abandoned and overgrown dam

12 The guardians are inspecting the ships before they enter the old city's waters. Once the design is made, it is all about the story!

13 Having an overview of a concept design can show prospective clients that you know what you're doing when you make a design



12



13

The Artist



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Download the free trial at www.lightwave3d.com



Italian digital artist Lorenzo Zitta knows how to create thought provoking still images with LightWave 11.6. Whether the still is computer-generated with LightWave, an artful arrangement of digital photos, or a combination of the two, the composition of the scene – with its attention to detail and unusual merging of objects – demands a closer look.

"Thanks to LightWave, I can quickly test many different approaches for my projects. I love bringing models into Layout and switching on Radiosity, then start working on shading and lighting, bringing in more elements, and testing and improvising to get the look I want." - Lorenzo Zitta.

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The Artist

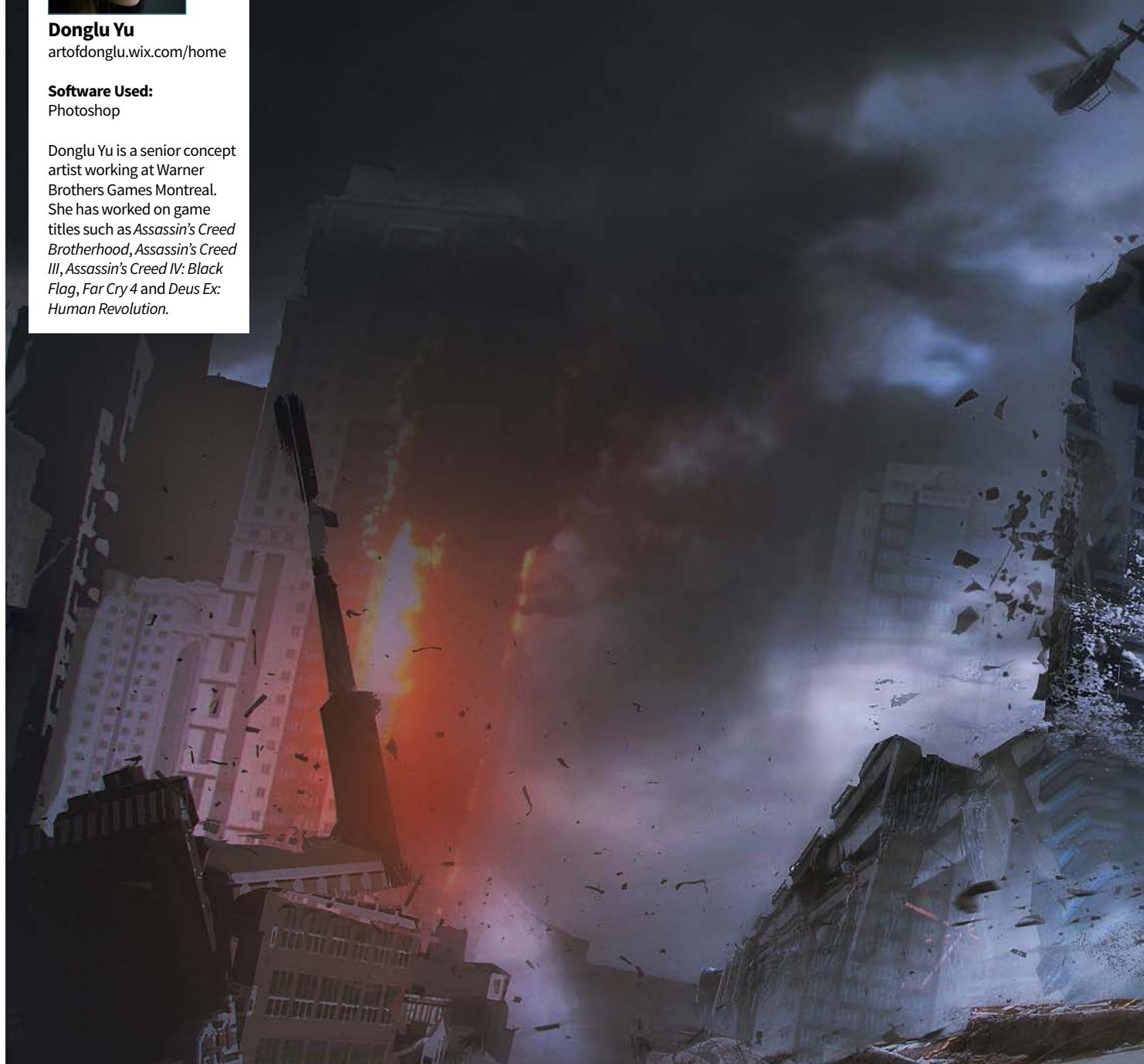


Donglu Yu

artofdonglu.wix.com/home

Software Used:
Photoshop

Donglu Yu is a senior concept artist working at Warner Brothers Games Montreal. She has worked on game titles such as *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, *Assassin's Creed III*, *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, *Far Cry 4* and *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*.



Add drama with a tsunami

Plunge your art into a world of destruction with senior games concept artist Donglu Yu's guide to creating a tsunami 





Learn how to distort buildings and send debris flying in this dramatic scene...

Creating a destruction scene may seem like a challenging task, but there is a certain recipe and some shortcuts to make the artistic process much easier. In this tutorial we will take a step-by-step approach in order to understand how to create a powerful and visually appealing tsunami scene.

There are two key elements for this scene: interesting shapes for destroyed buildings, and the tsunami effect elements, such as the wave, smoke, fire, and debris. These effects are essential in portraying the disaster caused by earthquakes, submarine landslides, or other disturbances.

At an early stage, we can obtain a convincing result by observing photo references to analyze building silhouettes. We'll then find a nice composition using those silhouettes to further enhance this epic scene. Once the foundation is set, I will take you through the photo manipulation steps to lay down realistic-looking textures for the final image.



01

We will continue with a lighting pass to bring out the silhouette of the broken architectures against a dramatic and cloudy sky. Furthermore, the effects, especially those of the tsunami waves, will be studied and integrated into the image. At the final stage, we will do some polishing work to tighten everything together.

For each step, I will explain applied Photoshop tools in detail to facilitate the learning process. I will also share with you three very

useful digital painting tips to give you greater insight into finding artistic solutions for your own image.

01 Brainstorm and research: I like to put all my photo references on a big canvas in Photoshop. This allows me to have a quick overview of all the city building shapes that are contained in the photos.

I am going over each photo separately to assess which ones have potential to create interesting



02



03

"Alter all the building shapes using the Free Transform tool to see how bending and breaking the building façades give the impression of mass destruction"

silhouettes and compositions. Using the Path tool, I make clean selections of those building and debris shapes. After the selection is done, I go to the Path tab to rename my Path selection as 'selected buildings'. If I don't do this, the Work Path will be replaced if I start a new path by accident. In order to make the building silhouettes stand out from the reference board for later use, I create a red outline around the selected buildings.

Now I zoom out of the board to squint at the red outline and try my best to memorize the silhouettes. This board now becomes my foundation against which I will double-check my shapes for the rest of the painting process.

02 **Breaking the shapes:** We can't use the shapes exactly as they are since this is a tsunami scene. The bottom of the building

is impacted by the huge waves, resulting in the collapse of the upper part of the building. I therefore alter all the building shapes by using the Free Transform tool to see how I can bend and break the building façades to give the impression of mass destruction.

This step only creates a small challenge as the majority of the references for a tsunami scene are of the aftermath; I am trying to create a tsunami scene right in the action, when the waves are coming in and hitting the streets. The bottom part of the buildings are mostly damaged, while the top part of the architecture is collapsing, but not destroyed. I try to think of the movies that deal with the theme of natural disaster, and do my best to mimic the glimpses that I still have of those in my memory.

03 **Composition studies:** It is much easier to make interesting compositions with the broken shapes. I try both a horizontal and a vertical canvas to assess which one is more immersive. The vertical images are all dominated by one main building, all fractured and at the edge of collapsing. A horizontal image gives us a larger street view so that I can have

a clean vanishing point at the two-thirds point of the canvas, thus meeting the criteria of the composition rule of thirds.

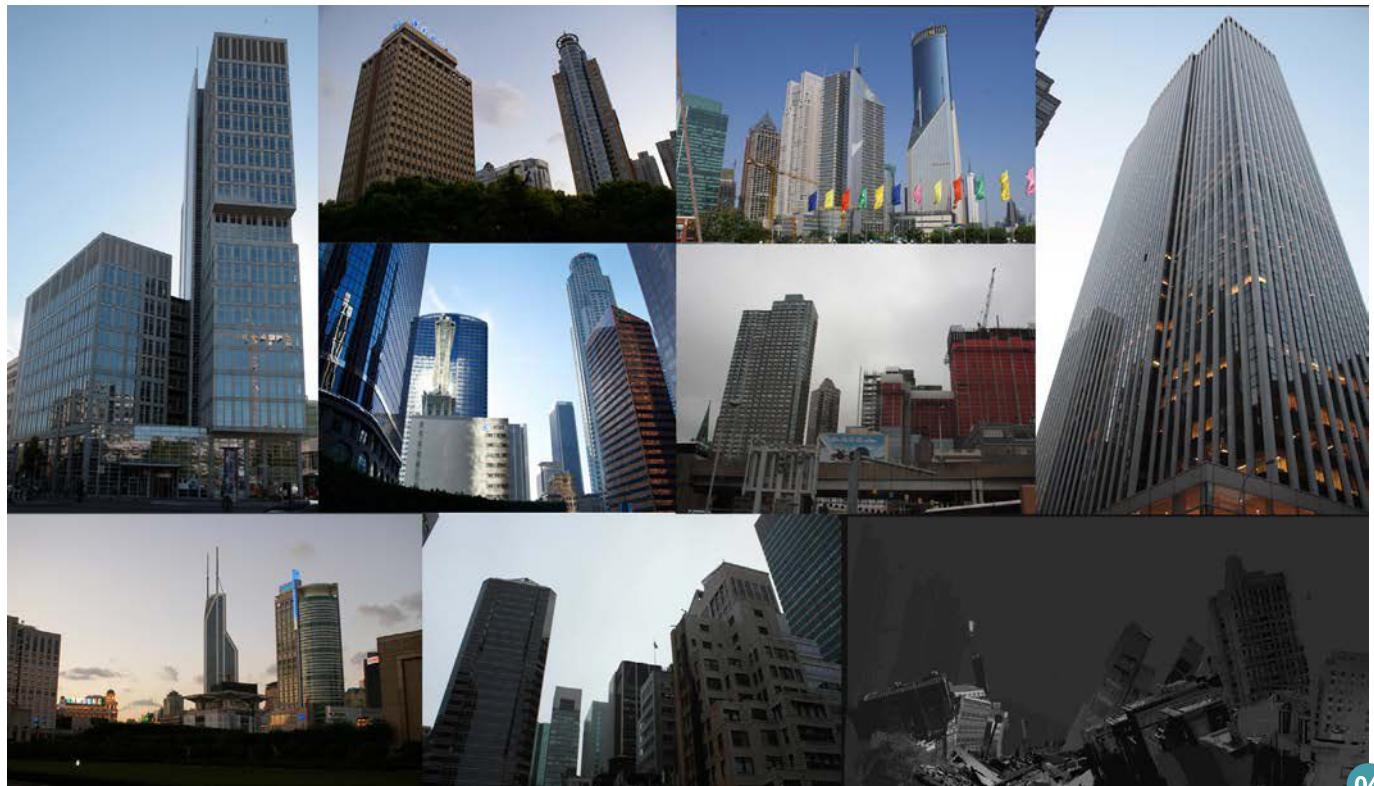
After a moment of consideration, I decide to go with the horizontal one. It offers me more empty areas where I can play with the water effects.

I isolate the chosen composition on a brand new canvas to work on it. I try to create more depth in the image by subtly tweaking value changes. I am not entirely happy with the result, but I will move on to the next step. With the texture and some lighting information, I will be in a better position to tweak my final composition. ▶

01 **The brainstorming process to help with finding appealing silhouettes**

02 **This step is crucial for finding an impressive composition**

03 **Sketch out a few options to choose from as the first idea is not always the strongest**



04



05

04 Study the original photo source: Now I go back to my reference board to see what photo textures can be incorporated to my composition. I go through a similar process as the first step, but pay even more attention to the textures instead of the silhouettes.

At this point, I feel the necessity to find more texture references for skyscrapers. I go to www.freetextures.3dtotal.com to see if there are some

tall buildings that I can use to create a focal point in my image.

After the researching phase, I lay down all the textures on a big board. Notice how these photos are mostly composed of building façades rather than being silhouette-heavy as in the first step. I simply use the Lasso tool to cut out the façades that I would like to use later in the photo manipulation stage.

I keep studying my chosen composition so that the selected façades will still share the same design language as the old ones in the composition study.

05 Photo manipulation: This step is more technical than artistic. I use all the available Photoshop tools to gain a better photo integration. The Free Transform tool is the most commonly used one. Press Ctrl+T to have faster



06

"The sky's color palette is crucial as it dictates the overall tone of the ambience. I select a gray, desaturated cloudy sky to enhance the sinister mood of the image"

access to the tool, then press Ctrl while dragging on the four-corner bounding box to manipulate the photo texture.

I use Adjustments layers, such as Curves and Color Balance, to achieve a neutral-looking result, which means no high contrast and highly saturated color information within the textures. When the values stay in the mid-tone range, I will have more flexibility to tweak the lighting in the later steps.

I also watch the ratio relationship of the photo textures – certain elements, such as the important buildings, need to be scaled up a little bit to create the dramatic feeling. Note that this shouldn't be too exaggerated so as to avoid a cartoonish feeling.

This step takes some patience, but the time spent is well worth it. It lays down the color foundation for the final painting.

06 Basic lighting pass: A basic lighting pass can help me to sort out the texture information established in the previous step very efficiently. It will allow me to establish a better depth relationship based on the fog density that I put between the buildings.

Atmospheric perspective is a great technique for achieving this effect: the foreground has the darkest value ranges, the middle-ground should have few points of high contrast in order to

PRO TIPS

Layer organization

I like to work with only a few layers to make my painting process more organic and flexible. When I reach certain stages with a satisfying result, I don't hesitate to merge certain tweaking layers. The only important point is that I constantly keep all my important masks which allow me to have easy selections and clean edges.

The main layers that I usually keep separate are based on their depth information, such as a foreground layer, middle-ground layer, and background layer. Sometimes I also keep a few fog layers separate so I can adjust their tonal relationship much more easily. With less than 10 layers, you can access your layers with a greater speed to make the painting process much more flexible.

Brushes

With a limited set of brushes, you can focus more on the painting itself instead of trying to find the right brush to paint with.

80-percent of my brush set consists of painting brushes, such as a Round Soft/Hard Airbrush, a few different Charcoal brushes, and a few Square and Triangle brushes to paint with hard edges. The rest is mostly just effect brushes, for fog or cloud, dust, water, vegetation, and so on.

I like to try different brushes that various artists upload to their websites, but I do frequently clean up to remove the ones that I don't really use. There are probably only 20–30 brushes that are part of my permanent collection, and they are more than enough to achieve a great painting experience.

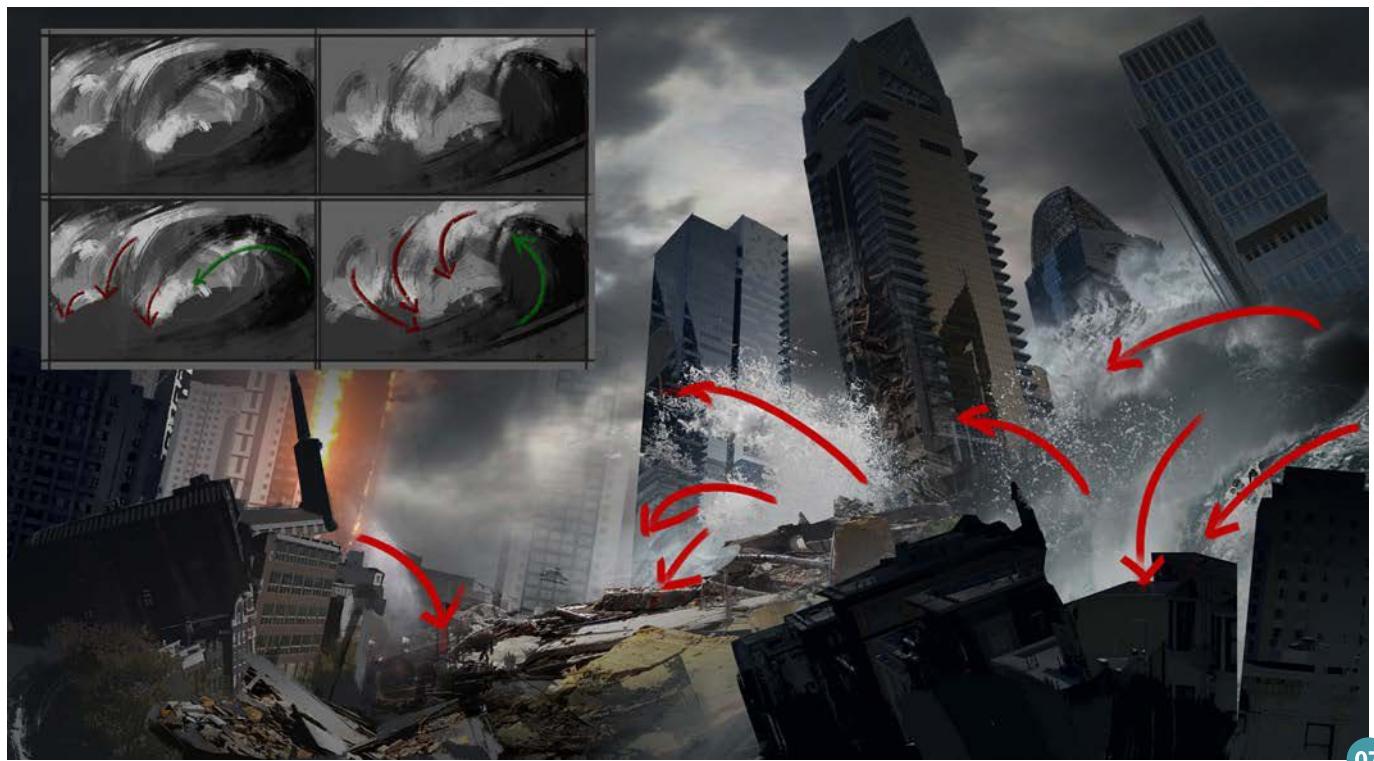
draw attention to the main buildings, and all the background elements should fade gradually into the fog with the lowest tonal contrast.

At this point, I start a basic sky background in the image. The sky's color palette is crucial as it dictates the overall tone of the ambience. I select a gray, desaturated cloudy sky to enhance the sinister mood of the image. I take care of the sky area behind my main building as this area has to be lighter in order to punctuate the silhouette of the main building. ▶

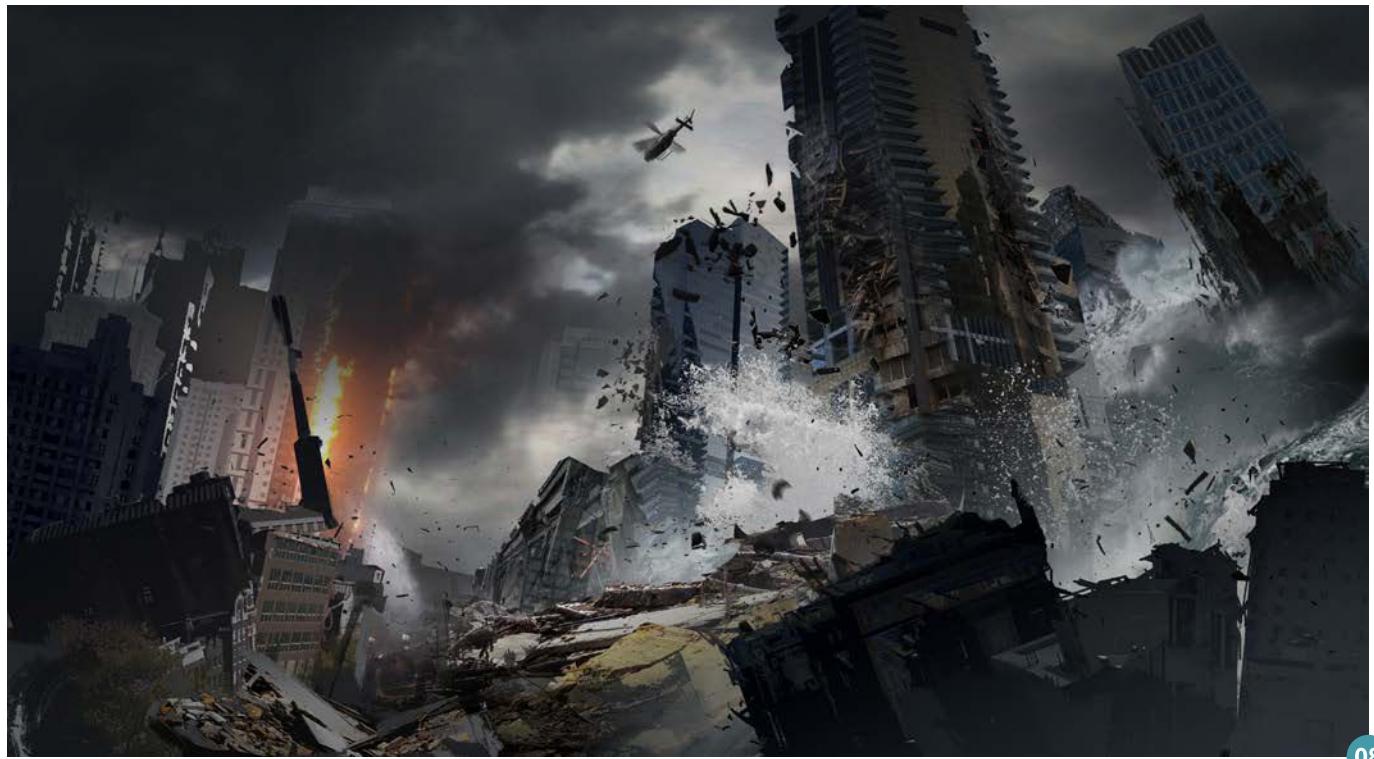
04 Photo texture integration has become an integral part of creating a realistic looking concept art

05 Digital manipulation of photo textures can take time, but the effort will be well paid off in the end

06 The basic lighting pass can easily help sort out the spatial relationship of the building elements



07



08

07 Painting waves: The wave is one of the key elements that contributes to the success level of the image.

I look at lots of photo references to study the natural behavior of waves, and do a few quick sketches to study their flow and direction.

The green arrows on my sketches indicate the main direction in which the wave is heading. The red arrows indicate the smaller variations of the

water direction within that big curve. I try to apply what I have learned with the sketch studies in the scene. I do my best to keep the direction of the waves consistent, so it creates a strong visual impact for the viewer.

With the waves, the scene suddenly becomes full of motion – I am pretty happy with the result. I decide to add some big water splashes to create the illusion of the huge waves hitting the buildings themselves.

08 Adding debris: For a more convincing visual effect, it is essential to add debris to complement the collapsing movement. As the collapsing impact starts from the bottom of the buildings, I will add more debris there.

The impact will go gradually upwards, causing glass to break. I take extra care to place the flying debris at the spots where the façades break, which allows the debris to merge seamlessly with the edge of the broken building fronts.

I keep the debris flying direction the same as the water waves because they share the same physical impact. At this point, I also take more care with the building edges, making windows and railings break, following the movement of the waves.

I pay attention to the values on the debris so that they also follow the atmospheric perspective: the debris in the background is lighter than the foreground ones. To conclude this step, I add a motion blur to further enhance the movement of the flying debris.

09 Final lighting adjustment: Now it is time to tighten up the lighting to make the scene even more convincing. The best way to double-check your lighting is to check your values. I use a black-and-white adjustment layer on top of all my layers to see the whole painting in grayscale.

If there is any very bright spot or dark spot popping up, that probably indicates that you need to make some adjustments. I limit the use of my black, but I don't completely avoid using it since the black gives a nice level of contrast. I leave the brightest values for the elements that I want to show off. This way, the viewer's eyes can flow better within the image.

I take this last opportunity to adjust my fog intensity to make the depth information clear. I use a cloud/smoke Soft brush to paint on a new layer set to Screen mode. Then I play with the Opacity to achieve the subtle effect.

10 Final polishing: There are three small things that I like to do at the final



09

stage, just to tighten everything together. Small highlights are important and I add them to accentuate certain edges and make the shapes pop out. Then I do a subtle Radial Blur to mimic the camera movement.

Go to Filter > Blur > Radial Blur, set the amount to 10, and set Blur Method to Zoom. This makes all your image edges blur into the center of the image. In order to make this effect more subtle, I create a mask on the layer, erase the areas that I don't need, and reduce the Opacity to around 30%. Finally, I add chromatic aberration to mimic the lens effect.

Go to Filter > Lens Correction then go under the Custom tab and play with the three sliders in the Chromatic Aberration section. This allows you to offset the RGB channels to mimic the lens effect.

The painting is now complete. I hope that you have learned a few tricks and a nice recipe to attack such complex scenes. ●

07 It is crucial to understand the flow and the natural behavior of the water wave to create a tsunami scene

08 Adding slightly blurred flying debris can bring even more realism to your effects. They can also enhance the visual impact of the water waves

09 Make the final adjustment on the values. A grayscale version of the image can give a better idea of the value distribution

10 Make a few final tweaks to tighten the whole image together, including painting the edges, adding a subtle motion blur, and adding some chromatic aberration



10

The Artist



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beginner's guide to **sketching** characters, creatures & concepts

Embark on a sketching journey with the inspirational Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts.

From gesture drawing and finding simple shapes to mastering line quality and shading, Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts is a fantastic companion that will teach you to sketch confidently while helping you improve the way you design. Your journey will begin with a look at drawing materials and techniques, before moving on to essential warm-up exercises to help you become familiar with the fundamental basics. Four master projects by seasoned professional artists will then take you from concept to final illustration, walking you step by step through poses, designs, and costumes before culminating in a final scene. Featured artists include Justin Gerard, Brun Croes, and Sylwia Bomba.





Create an infected character

David Roya's guide to using photo-manipulation techniques to turn a stock image into a realistic painting of a character being overtaken by an infection ➤

The Artist



David Roya
behance.net/Tristate

Software Used:
Photoshop

David Roya is a self-taught digital artist based in Malmö, Sweden. He works mainly on graphic design, matte painting and retouching. David currently works for IKEA Communications as a retouching artist.



Quickly create distinctive characters with these handy photo manipulation tips...

Character creation can sometimes be a cumbersome task, but today I will show you how to do it in a slightly different manner. Using a stock photo as a reference and combining it with textures and painting, I will teach you how to give your character a completely different look. Techniques covered in this tutorial will include blending textures together using different brush and blending techniques. This method will give you a greater chance of achieving a high level of detail, as well as giving you some guidelines for light and perspective. Bear with me and I will show you how to create a highly detailed character in a pretty short time span.



01

01 Scouting for references: The first practical step is actually to look for a good reference image, but you cannot do that until you know what you want to create. Using a stock or reference photo doesn't create the character for you; it only gives you a basis to build upon. So before you start to look for photos you should either try to sketch out how you want the character to look or, try to have a firm image in your mind when you search for references or stock images.

02 Prepare the reference photo: In my mind I opt to create a dark-themed infected zombie character. No surprise there, right? I've already spent some time on Step 1 and found a good image to match this theme.

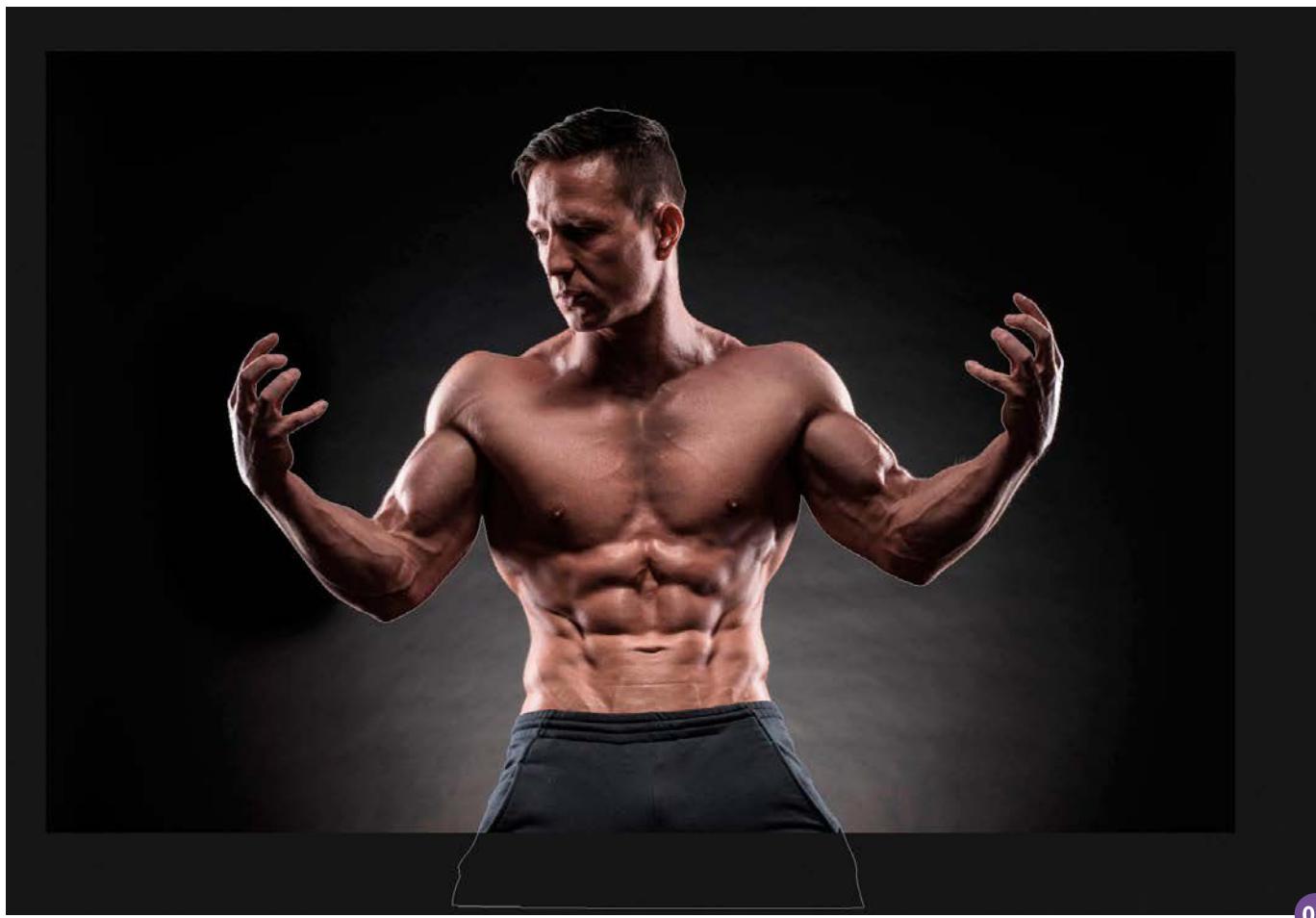
The first thing I do is replace his right hand with his left one because it has a better look. It doesn't matter if the hands look the same because I'm only using the right one as a reference later on when I start painting over it.

I start by drawing a selection around the hand, copy it into its own layer and flip it horizontally. Since this image has some shadowing going on, it's not going to be so tricky to paste this into place. I'm just using the old hand as a reference for where the new one is going to end up. When the hand is in place I use a layer mask and start painting away the areas I don't want.

03 Setting up the composition: It's now time to extract him from the background



02



03

so he is on his own layer. Since there's no complex background here it's going to be a pretty easy task. I use the Pen tool for this since I'm so used to it and it gives me consistent results.

I don't really have to be exact here, especially not around his hair, since I'm just going to paste him into a dark background anyway. Once the path is created I save it for later and convert the path into a selection. This enables me to copy-and-paste him on his own layer.

04 Color and mood adjustments: Now I have him on his own layer I can start doing adjustments to him. Since I am planning to focus more on his upper body, I decide to crop the photo a bit on the lower end in order to create a wider composition.

Then I lighten up some of the crushed darker areas with a curves layer, and reduce some color using the hue/saturation settings. I also give it a cooler tone which obviously fits the theme a little bit. This is more of a starting point to get him in place and get the 'mood' going. I also darken him a bit on his lower body to draw more focus to his face and chest area. This is done by just painting in multiply mode which fades him into the background. ▶



04

01 Finding a great starting reference is a key part to creating the character

02 Before you start adding textures you should make sure the model has the pose you want

03 Creating a selection can be done in many ways, but for this task the Pen tool is great

04 Darkening the lower-half draws attention to this area



05

05 Pasting the texture: It's time for the fun part to begin. The choice of textures is as equally important as the choice of reference photo, if not more important. You have got to check that the texture quality matches the image quality of the reference photo. The more depth it has, the better. The textures will be used to change the appearance of his skin and give him a totally different look. I usually get most of my textures from www.cgtextures.com which is a website for finding a ton of great textures.

I've chosen a perforated rock texture which sort of looks like infected skin once you start adding it into place.

Now, this can be a bit tricky but it is still a fun part. I align the texture so it follows the body part which I'm going to paste it on. In this instance, I transform the texture so it sits alongside his neck. After the texture is in place, it's time to start to blend it in. This is easily done by a combination of dodge and burn, but can also be done by painting in overlay which I'll talk more about in a bit.

06 Texture blending: The trick to achieving a great texture blending with the base photo is to look at four important areas: the light, the color, sharpness and perspective. Each of them has got to align with the photo for it to look somewhat realistic. As I talked about in the previous step there are different ways to go about achieving this.

PRO TIP

Develop an eye for inconsistencies

Good photo-manipulation is quite rare. Usually you see too much contrast, sharpness and color differences. Blending photographic images and painted material together puts a greater pressure on maintaining a realistic look. The only right way of doing this is to develop an eye for inconsistencies. Then you can use the tools in Photoshop to achieve a greater balance.



06



07



08

I usually prefer to create a layer in overlay mode and link it to the texture layer. This way the change is not permanent and I can create both highlights and shadows.

Overlay is usually a better way to do this than just using dodge and burn since overlay ‘consumes’ light more realistically, rather than just creating a flat look like the Burn tool does.

I find a good texture which fits as his arm and neck, so I put this into place and start to mask away unwanted areas. This is a pretty creative process because it forces you to see possibilities in textures which otherwise look boring to you.

07 Create a new facial expression: Now it's time to start working on the face. I want him to look pretty badass so the first thing

I do is to go into Liquify and start to bend his eyebrows so he looks angry rather than scared or surprised. Just don't liquify the face too many times since this reduces sharpness significantly, try to do it all in one pass.

Repeat the whole process of finding a texture which you see fit, and then add it into place. The whole thing looks kind of rubbish at the start, but it's all about seeing the end result and striving to achieve the look you want.

I figure he would look more evil with just white eyes, so I go ahead and paint in normal mode over the eyes with a Round brush. I also want him to have some more details, so I roughen up the hair by painting new hair shafts, and create small holes and scars all over the face to really give him some detail.

08 Overusing textures and adding depth:

Before creating more depth and doing the final blending part I have got to mention that it's important not to overuse one texture, as it will easily look like it has been ▶

05 Study the light of the original picture, to know how you should adjust the texture

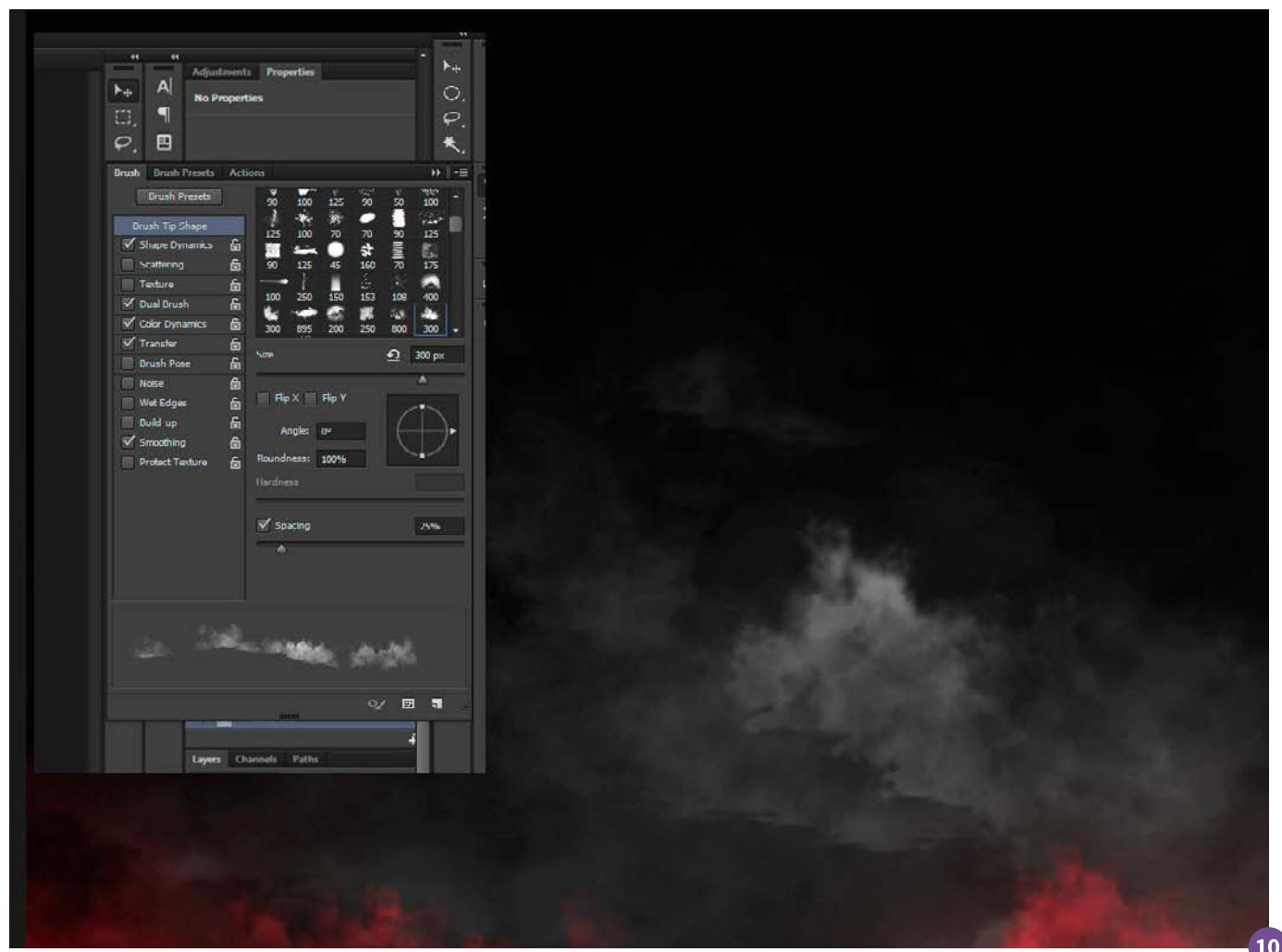
06 Looking for shapes in textures is important. A skull of a dinosaur serves as a great texture for his arm

07 Removing color and light inconsistencies blends the image together

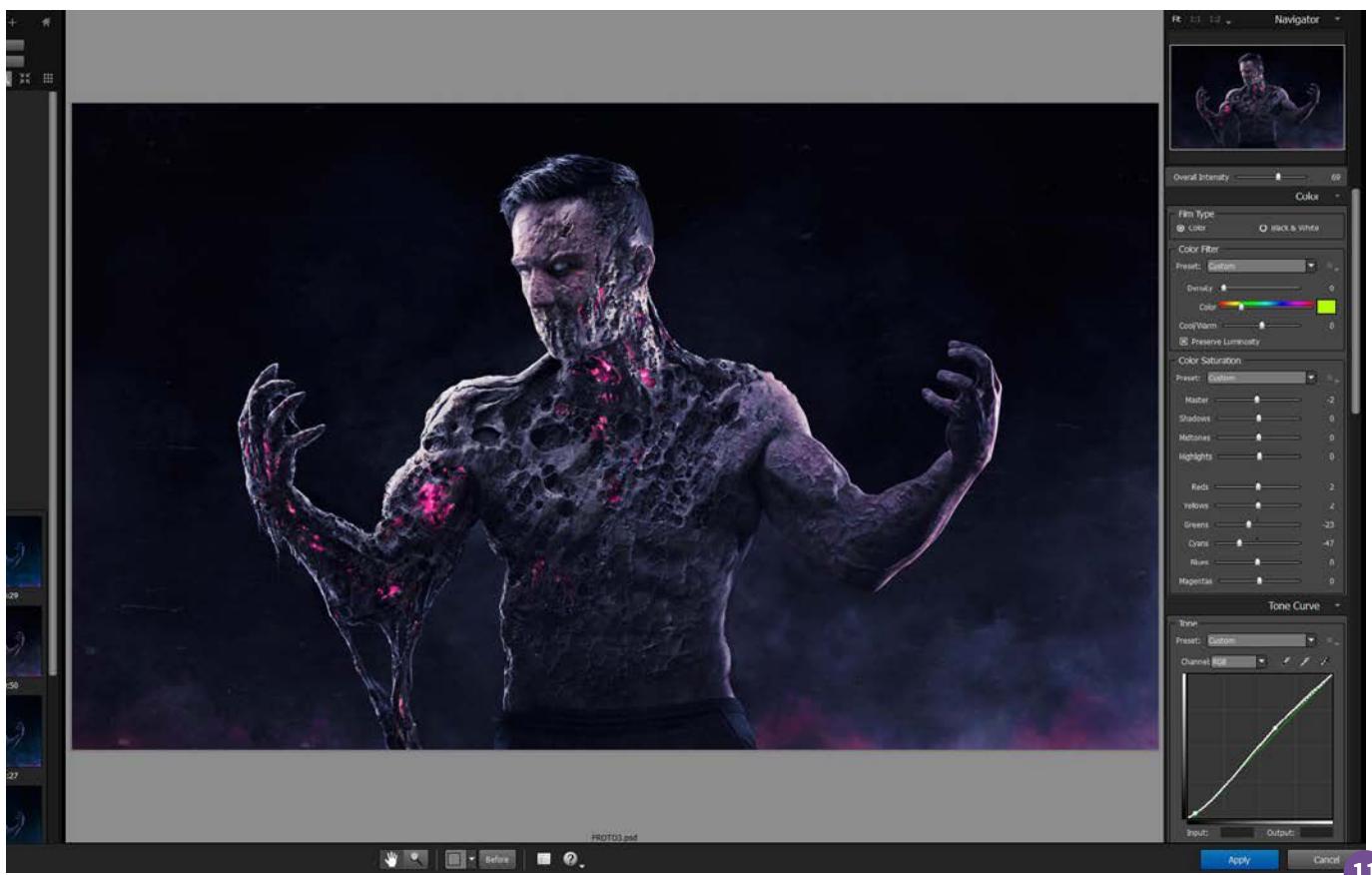
08 The left image shows all the layers without any light and color adjustment



09



10



11

"Light is very important if you want something to look real and have depth to it"

repeated. In that case, see if you can find other instances of the same texture, or try to hide it with a Clone tool. In my image here, I also leave a human side to him so the transformation is more evident. Doing this also adds more pressure to create a realistic look since blending a human with supernatural effects makes us look at the image with a sharper eye.

Once all my textures are in place I go ahead and match them by removing different color casts in the texture and studying the overall light over the picture. I mainly look at how the light falls on my model, then I primarily paint with overlay and multiply. I pay special attention to the lower part of the image to fade the texture alongside him.

I already see some shadowing and depth in my texture so I go ahead and enhance that by darkening the darker areas and lightening the lighter ones. Once you are into this stage I highly recommend that you have a tablet. A mouse can do this, but it will be a lot harder and the end result won't look the same.

09 **Creating a glowing skin effect:** I want some of his skin to light up like there's something underneath it. I find a great lava

texture which I think will give me great results for this. The process is pretty much the same here. I put the texture in place and add layer masks to them. I usually rotate and scale the texture quite a lot to make sure I don't repeat it on different areas of the image.

The brush which I paint my layer mask on is a pretty rough one too, so the results look more random. On some smaller areas I also clone from the texture directly on to a new layer which basically gives me the same result. Don't be afraid to create too many layers, as long as you have them fairly well organized.

10 Add a smoke background: Usually when I do characters like this I try to stay away from creating backgrounds that are too complex so it gives the character more focus.

For this image, I create smoke and coloring just to make the overall composition a little bit more interesting. I start to randomly paint with some cool smoke and dust brushes to create some atmosphere. When the smoke is in place I add some color by just painting in color mode on some random parts.

11 Color grading and finishing touches: Now we are at the end stage of the creation. This is where I usually start creating smaller details on the character to make them

feel more believable. I want it to look like he's being overtaken by his infection so I create some goo-like stuff that grabs his arm. This is just done by regular painting. I start off sketching the shape and then I add some highlights and shadows to make it look more real. Once again light is very important if you want something to look real and have depth to it.

A cool magenta tone to this would be great so I'm going into my color adjustment plug-in in Photoshop called Exposure by Alien Skin. I think it provides me with a more intuitive way to create color looks.

Lastly I change the hue of the skin effect to a more pink tone so it matches the color scheme better, and I end up putting some grain on the overall composition to make it look rougher. ●

09 Only create smaller areas of the effect. Too much of it would only create an imbalance

10 Custom brushes are an easy way to create effects

11 Alienware Exposure is a great tool for figuring out which color look you want the image to have

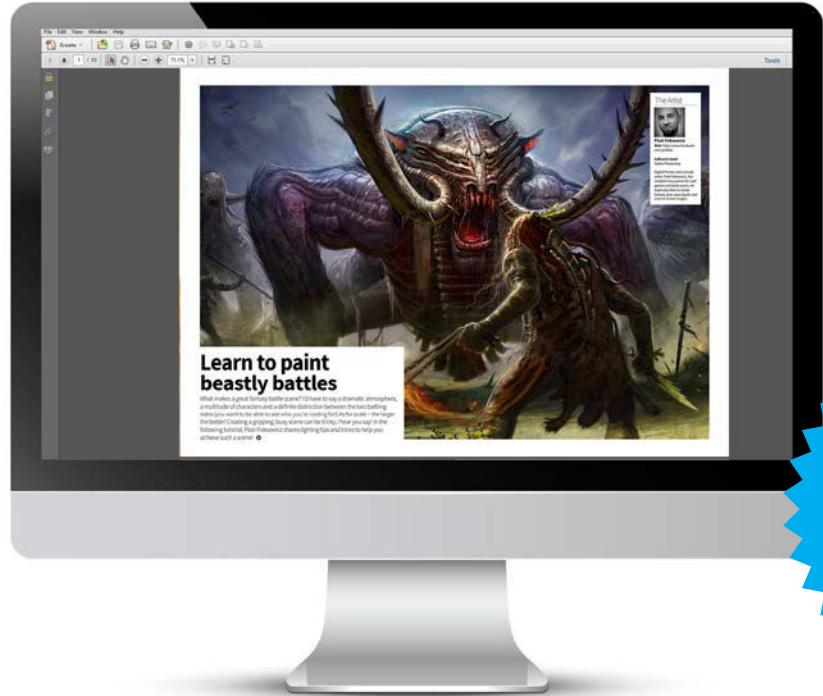
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beginner's guide to digital painting in Photoshop®: **characters**

Following on from the highly successful *Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop*, this latest title explores the popular techniques used in character design.

Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting: Characters is a comprehensive guide for artists wishing to create convincing and detailed characters. It features established artists such as Charlie Bowater (concept artist at Atomhawk) and Derek Stenning (freelance concept artist and illustrator, with clients including Marvel Entertainment and Nintendo) who share their industry experiences by covering such aspects as posing characters, choosing the correct costumes, conveying emotions, and creating suitable moods.

Comprehensive step-by-step instructions – plus a quick tips section demonstrating how to paint elements that are integral to character design and a glossary covering essential Photoshop tools – make this an invaluable resource for those looking to learn new skills, as well as those pursuing the next level.

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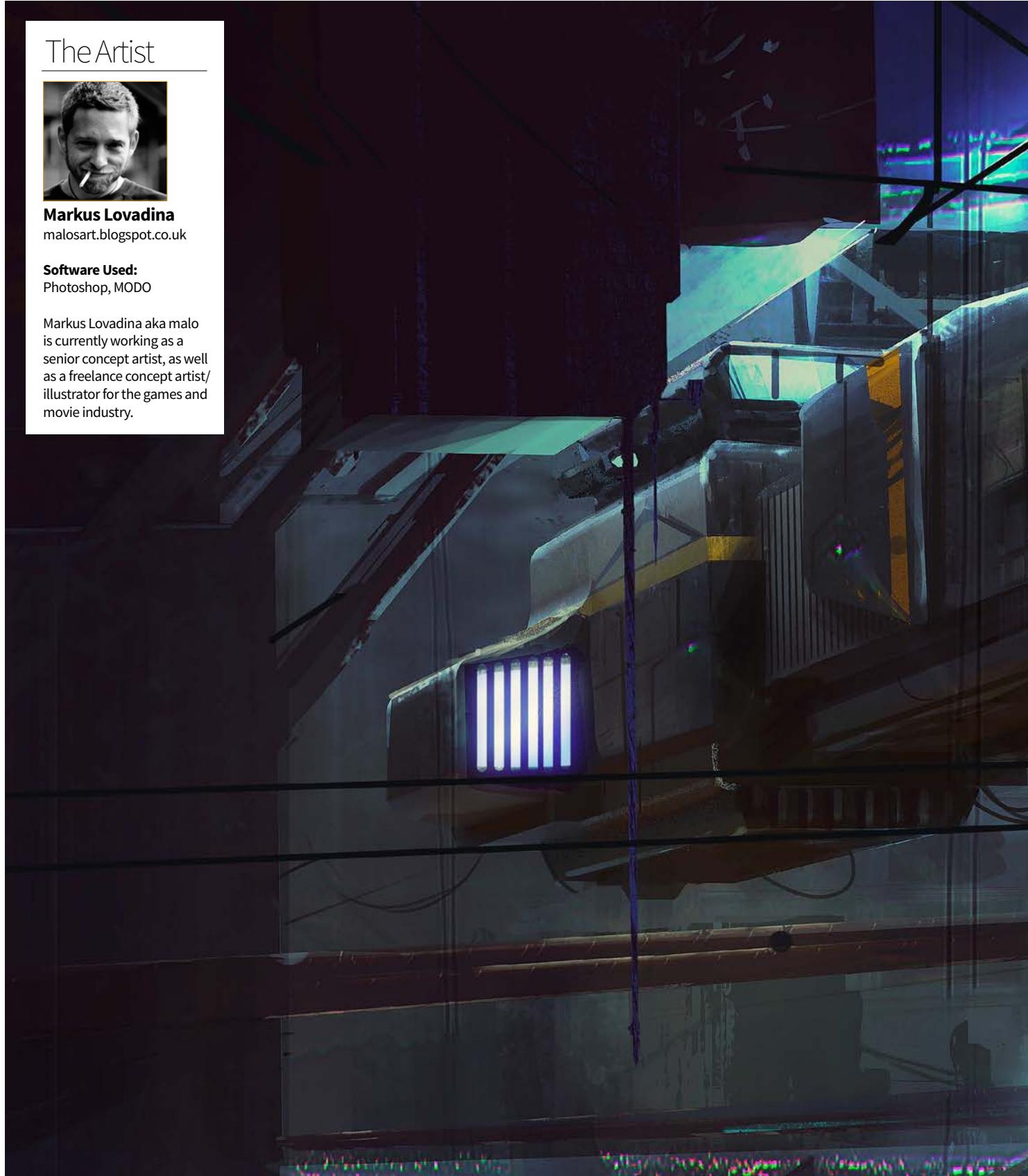


Markus Lovadina

malosart.blogspot.co.uk

Software Used:
Photoshop, MODO

Markus Lovadina aka malo is currently working as a senior concept artist, as well as a freelance concept artist/illustrator for the games and movie industry.



Design a hovering vehicle with depth

Discover how to use easily accessible 3D software to improve the perspective in your artwork with this handy tutorial by Markus Lovadina 





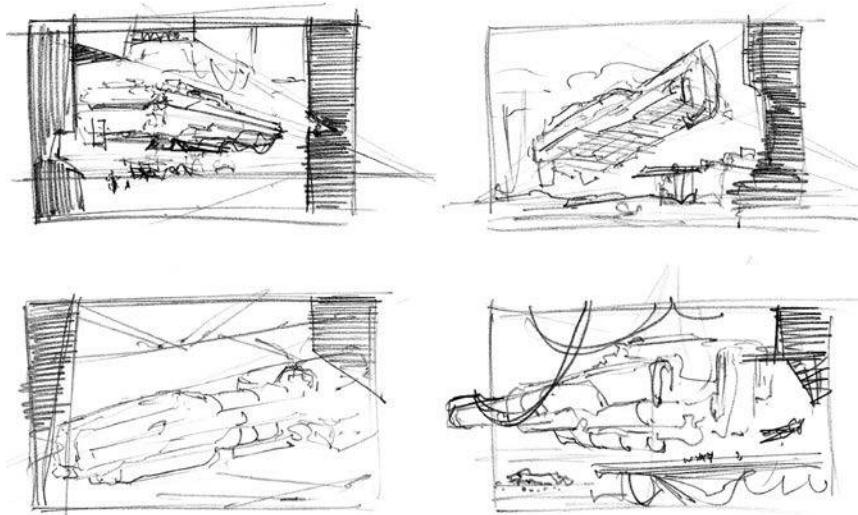
Learn to use 3D techniques to improve your 2D drawing of a hard surface air vehicle...

In this tutorial I'll capture a simple way to get used to perspective. Perspective is and will always be a tricky part of an image. This is especially true when the entire scene is quite complicated and has a lot of elements.

The brief I received was mostly about creating a hard surface air vehicle, but I'm a friend of creating an entire scene rather than just a vehicle design. So in this tutorial you'll learn how to get the right perspective and bring in some story telling elements as well.

Later on – for the base of my image – I'll use some 3D software. In my case – MODO, but this could be easily transferred to any other software such as SketchUp, Maya or 3ds Max.

I'll not go through the entire process of creating the vehicle in 3D since this tutorial is all about perspective and it doesn't make sense to explain anything that is related to this particular software if you don't have the chance to use it. It is more about showing a different way of sorting out perspective issues, to get the initial idea of a new workflow, and finally to have a base idea from where you can start off. I hope there will be some useful tips and tricks to help you in your artwork.



01

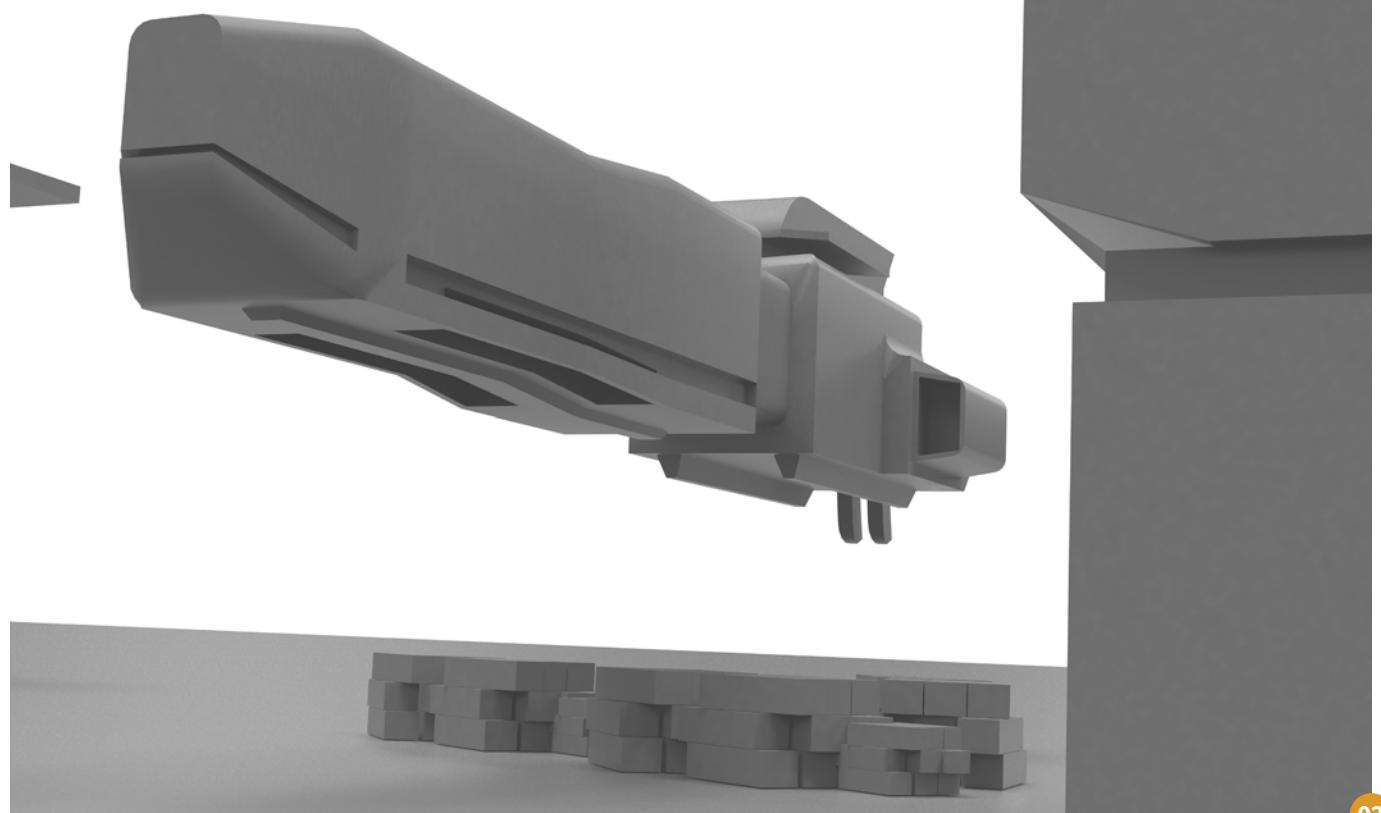
01 Rough sketches: Normally I don't start with rough pencil sketches or thumbnails, but starting from scratch with no idea where to head is sometimes difficult. So I decide to go back to the good old way and start with some rough pencil sketches. These sketches are quite loose and don't have much detail since they are mostly for composition and, in this case, to decide how the perspective can be set up. These sketches are already telling me how dynamic the entire scene will be and what needs to go on top to get some story telling elements in to the scene.

of creating concept art. It is especially useful if we have to come up with highly complex scenes or some tricky perspective challenges.

In this scene I use MODO to get a super rough model into place. This model could be made with any available software package. If you don't want to spend a lot of money I'd recommend using Google SketchUp. It is free and has all the tools you might need. I'm using MODO for most of my initial 3D block-ins (I've been working with it too long to get used to Maya or 3ds Max).

02 Quick 3D block-in: Using 3D applications is becoming more and more of a common way to speed up the entire process

Most of the time, when I am starting a new piece, I start with a cube and extrude polygons until I have a shape that is close to one of my sketches.



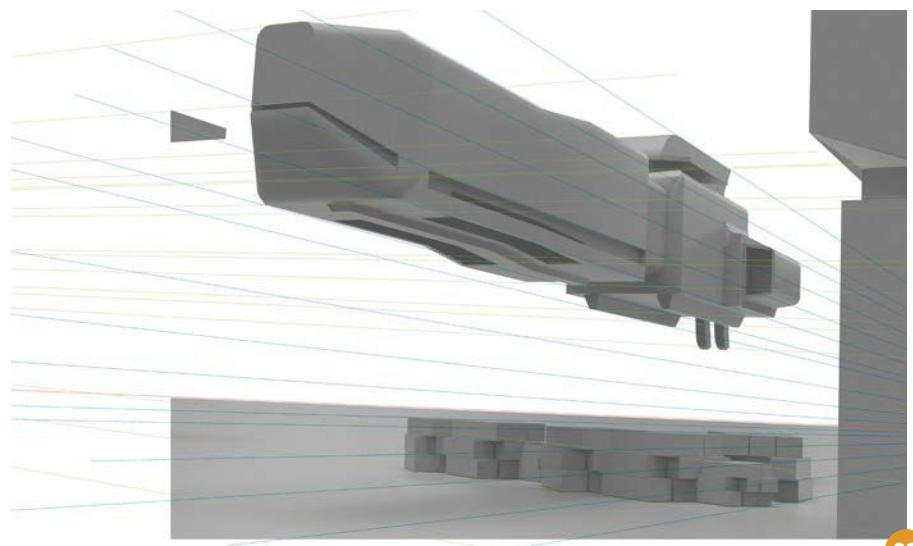
02

I just use the Bevel tool on the polygons and for the rounder shapes. I don't need a fully detailed model; just a simple shape that gives me enough information about perspective, camera angle and probably some surrounding elements (e.g., tower, boxes, and so on). Another reason to keep the entire model simple is that we will add all the details later on in Photoshop, and if I decide to get rid of one idea I shall do so in Photoshop.

03 Drawing the perspective lines:

I open the non-shaded render in Photoshop. The render is made in the right dimensions – in this case about 6,000 x 4,000 pixels. My next step is to extend the canvas to something about 15,000 x 4,000 pixels. This gives me enough space to draw my perspective lines. And here is the good thing about using 3D software; you have all the angles in place. I only have to extend the lines and to do so I use the line tool (where you can find the customized shapes).

The first thing I take care of is the horizon line (the red line). This is to me the most important line. Why? Because it provides all the other information you'll need to get your perspective right. I also like to have different colors for each of my viewpoints (the green and blue lines). By selecting the line tool, I just click on one of the edges provided by my rendering and follow the line until it hits my horizon line. This is where my first viewpoint is. I now start to draw multiple lines in the same way as the first one, always trying to match the angle of the rendering. I do the same



for the second viewpoint, just with a different color. If you are not certain add as many lines as you need to your different viewpoints. This might take a while but it is the most important part to get your perspective right!

04 Bringing in the background:

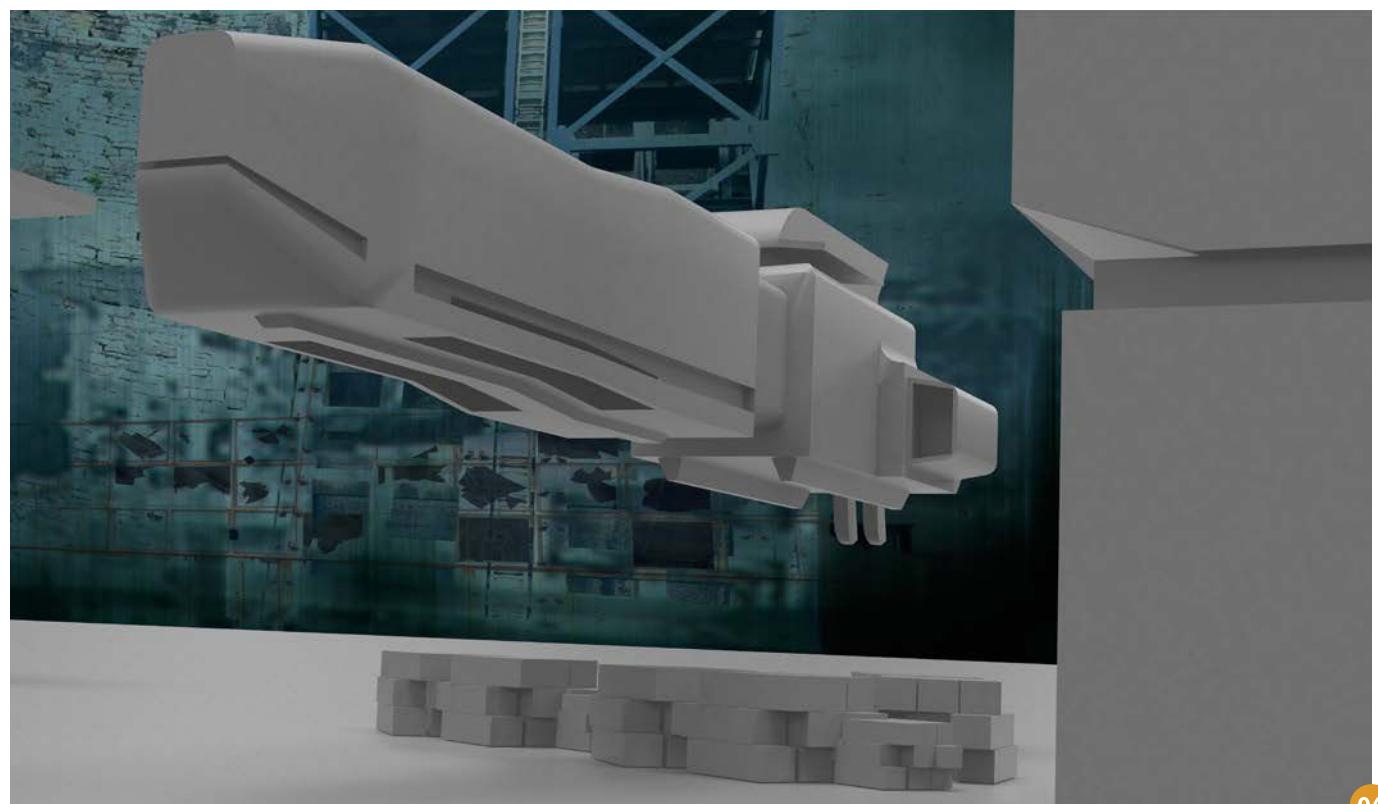
As soon as I have all my perspective lines in place it is time to move on to the fun part: the painting! With all the lines in place I don't have to worry about getting my brushstrokes or texture wrongly placed. I can focus on adding details. Using free images to get a first layer of color and texture is a good way to start. I don't have to focus on the details now as I'll add them later. Now it is time for the first color idea. Since the

01 Some simple rough ideas to get the ball rolling

02 As you see in the image this is a rather rough model. But it already provides enough information to set up the perspective

03 Knowing where your horizon is, is the most important part as the other perspective lines will be based on this

04 I'm using the background to give me a first idea of the colors I'll use later on as well as a simple texture base



render was done with an alpha channel it is easy to mask out the ship render. I select the channel tab on my layer palette, go to the alpha channel and click the alpha channel with a pressed Ctrl key. Back to my layer palette; I click on the mask icon (square with circle). Now the ship should be masked out. I'm adding a new layer behind the ship and paint in some blue-grayish tone. Next, I open one of the images I downloaded from www.freetextures.3dtotal.com and set the layer to soft

light. This provides enough color variation and adds a nice texture.

05 Rough color block-in: The background is set for the moment and it is time to move on to the actual ship and interior design. I'm adding a hue and saturation filter on top of all the layers to reduce the bright blue values. My next step is to select the mask, add a new layer on top of that, and start to paint some grayish tones

over the entire selection. This will give me some nice values.

For the floor I use a flat Round brush with texture to give some hint of structure. I then deselect the ship, floor and the bit of the tower on the left-hand side with the selection tool and a pressed Alt-key. On a new layer, with the same brush, I add some dark tones to the tower on the right-hand side. This will later become one of my



foreground elements. Using darker elements on the foreground is a great way to add depth to your image.

06 Color changes and first hint of details:

Now it is time to group all the layers. I prefer to keep my layers in layer-groups, rather than merging all the layers to one single layer. This allows me to get back to the single layers, just in case I want to change anything during the process.

Now I add a new layer, select my Circle brush and paint two circles on the layer. Time for the perspective lines we made at the beginning. Those lines are kept in a layer group and I can easily switch them on and off as needed. With the perspective lines visible, I select the transformation tool (Ctrl+T), right-click and click on deform. This tool allows me to deform all four corner-points and to bring the circle to the right perspective. Since we have all the lines in place, you just have to line up with the blue and green lines. By using the selection tool and the same brush as before, I create the extension of the tower on the upper right-hand side. You can draw a straight selection by holding down the Alt-key or a more random selection without the Alt-key.

07 First details for the air vehicle:

Time for some vehicle details. I keep the perspective lines visible as it is quite important to follow exactly those lines. There is nothing worse than details that are really out of perspective. With the Lasso tool selected, I start to draw in



07a

some straight design lines for the ship. One of those design elements is in the far back of the ship, and the other two are closer to the front. I'm going for some warm/cold contrast, so I pick a yellow and some darker orange. As I mentioned before, I'm using the same flat round textured brush. On the ground/floor I reuse the same colors to add some details and color variations. All the shapes are drawn in with the Lasso tool, as usual.

08 Brighten up! Feeling comfortable with the composition so far, I decide to add one of the key elements of an illustration or concept: LIGHT! There are multiple ways to add light into your concept. One way is to draw each light by hand or, you could make your life

a bit simpler. How? Easy! Just reuse one of your images you have painted in the past. In my case, there is a dedicated space on my hard drive, which is stuffed with old and unused images. ▶

05 Over-painting the whole image with a color gives some nice values for you to work with

06 Adding fog and mist always gives a nice mood and atmosphere

07a Adding details is way simpler when you know your perspective

07b Draw in some design lines in warm colors such as orange and yellow



07b

After opening one of these images, which is pretty high in contrast and colors, I copy the image and add it to a new layer. With the image in place I try different layer effects such as Soft Light, and vivid light and so on. Play around with those effects and they will surprise you. In my case I decide to go with color dodge. This effect pushes the light and the lights only. The colors didn't fit in the first place, so I press Ctrl+B (Color Balance) and adjust the lights, the mid-tones as well and the shadows. Just play around with this effect; it gives you plenty of options!

My next step is to add a new layer, still with the perspective lines visible, and to paint in some cables and tubes. If you click on one end and click with a pressed Shift key on the other end, you'll get a straight line. This might need redoing a couple of times depending of your brush settings (transparency, texture, and scale, and so on). But always remember to follow your perspective lines.

09 More design elements for the ship:

Since the ship still looks plain, I'll paint in some design elements and add some believability to the ship. Branding or design elements are quite important. Just take a look around you, everything is branded and our



08

PRO TIP

It is all about the point of view

Perspective is no magic, it is just hard training. I'd recommend to do some little perspective sketches once a day. They don't have to be highly complex, just enough that you'll get the idea of how it works. Try simple objects first and add the horizon line in later on or vice versa. Or go out and shoot some photographs then add some perspective lines on top in Photoshop. This all helps to get a better understanding on perspective and how to implement the knowledge into your work.



09



10

ship needs some branding tool! I'm grouping all previous layers and press Shift > Alt > Ctrl+E to get a new copy of all visible layers. I still have all the separated layers.

I add a new layer on top, select the round selection tool and draw in a circle. This round selection will be filled with a stroke about 16 pixels thick. I duplicate this circle (Ctrl+J) and make another round selection.

This time the selection will be filled with the same orange color on a new layer. After scaling down the circle to a small dot, I move the dot to the lower-left hand side of the two circles.

With the Ctrl key pressed, I select the smaller dot and increase the selection (Top Menu > Selection > Modify Selection > Increase) at about 15 pixels.

I delete the overlapping circles and there you go, some sort of logo. This logo will be used a couple of times on the ship as well as on the interior. In order to get the logo in perspective, duplicate it (Ctrl+J), press Ctrl+T for transformation and right-click to get it to deform. Now you'll be able to move all four corner points into the right position based on the perspective lines you still see.

10 Some story-telling elements: After a short break, I decide to add some story elements to the painting. Above the layers I create a new layer and paint some simple straight lines with the Round brush. No brush effect is selected, just a round non-transparent brush. To get the feel of a guard rail, I add some vertical lines to my horizontal strokes. This rail needs to be transformed in the same way as we did the logo.

Just make sure you are following your perspective lines. For the pilot I use one of my customized shapes. A customized shape could be all and everything. There are plenty of tutorials on how to make your own customized shapes so I won't dive into that. With the shape in place, I select the pilot, create a new layer on top and paint in some small little details with a simple Round textured brush. This pilot didn't need to be overly detailed as he's just a story element. On a new layer, using the same brush as for the pilot, I paint in some cables hanging down from the ceiling.

11 The final touch: I'm pretty much done with all the elements, so I think it is time for some final touches. I always enjoy adding a color balance or photo filter effect on top of my images. This could give the final color twist or

change the mood to something else, but this is just a personal flavor.

All layers are grouped again and a new copy of all the visible layers is on top of the layer group. Now I select the small half filled circle on the bottom of the layer palette and choose color balance. As described before, I play around with my lights, mid-tones and shadows. I increase the values for yellow and red on the mid-tones, the green on the highlights and add some blue to the shadows. As a last step I add a sharpening filter on top of the merged images, maybe twice just to get a super crisp look. ●

08 Light is an important part of a composition

09 Adding design elements will make the whole concept more believable

10 Telling a story is always more exciting

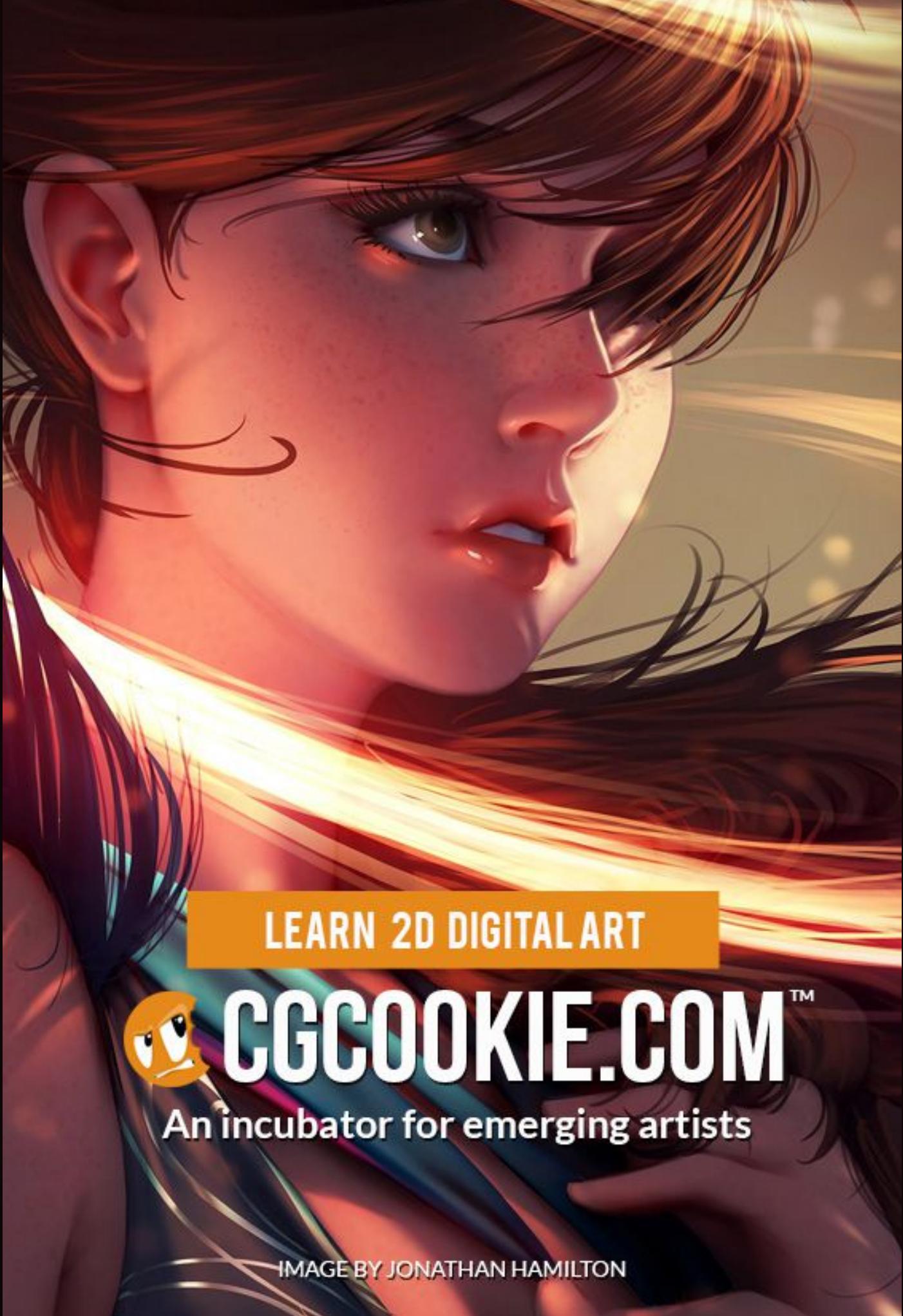
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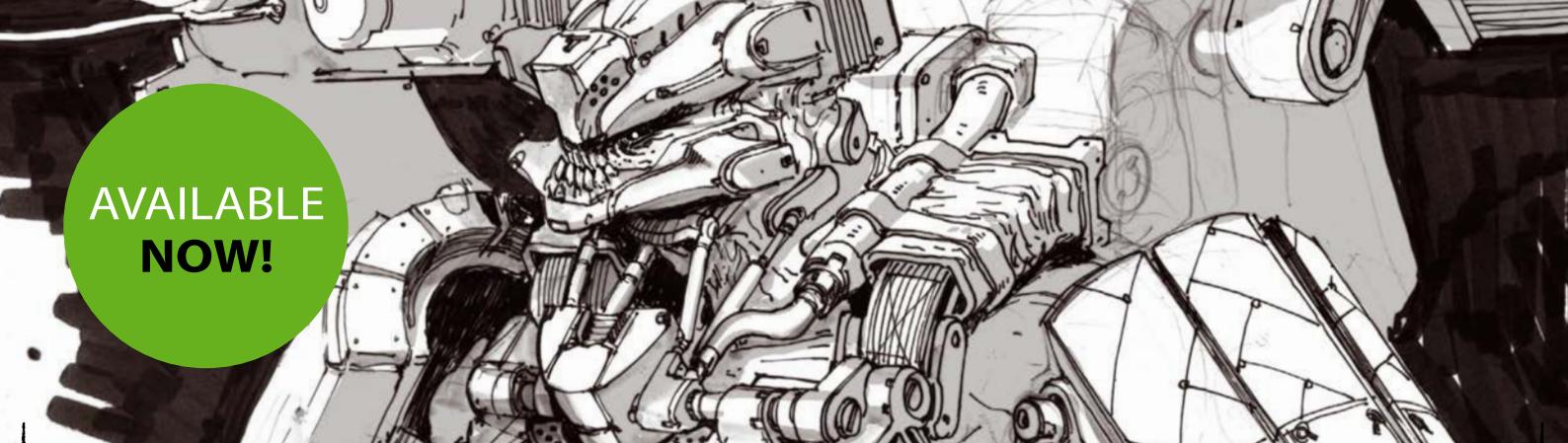
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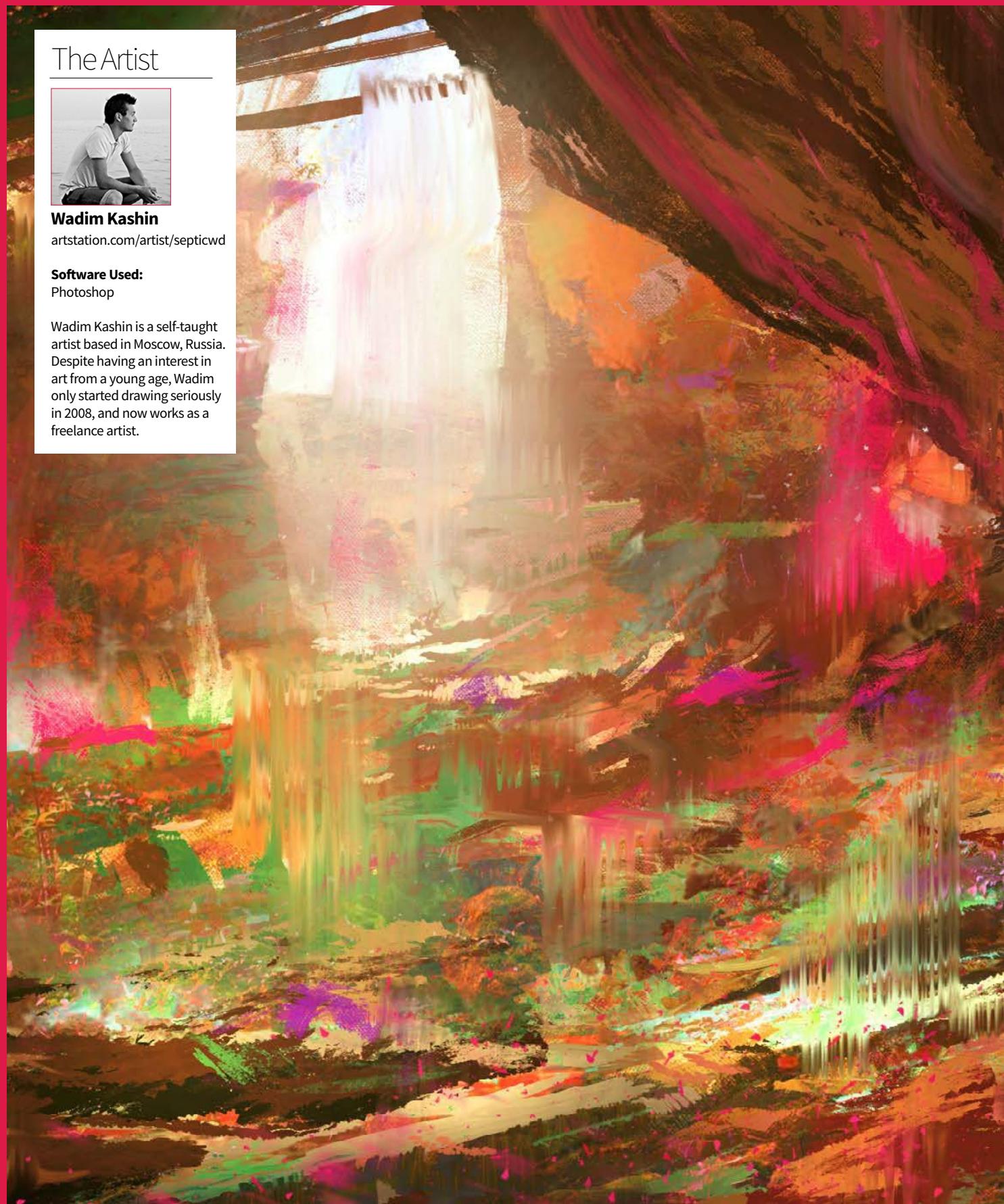


Wadim Kashin

artstation.com/artist/septicwd

Software Used:
Photoshop

Wadim Kashin is a self-taught artist based in Moscow, Russia. Despite having an interest in art from a young age, Wadim only started drawing seriously in 2008, and now works as a freelance artist.



Paint with energy

Wadim Kashin's landscapes are brought to life with a painterly, dynamic style. Here he talks to 2dartist about how he creates his colorful, energetic works 



Create an abstract artwork using color and texture...

The idea for creating this artwork *Valley of Color* came to me as a result of my usual evening drawing practice. From fast black-and-white sketches inspired by the last book I had read, I had the idea to draw something beautiful and interesting.

In this overview I will show you how I developed this early idea into my final piece. I hope this tutorial will be in some way helpful to you. I know how useful these types of tutorials can be and have benefited greatly from them myself in the past. In this context I would especially like to thank Arthur Haas and Stephan Martinière who never cease to inspire me with their ideas in their works.

01 **Early sketches and colors:** Before I start to create an artwork I always some

spend time on fast black-and-white sketches. For this work I started with the standard lines and continued to paint with various brushes on individual settings for each.

For me, when I start an artwork properly the first thing to do is to use references to help me find an interesting composition or scene in each sketch, in order to develop the idea and turn an ordinary sketch into full-fledged art.

I want to add that the more you draw and practice the more you notice and create different details. You try to do them better and more beautifully. When creating my artwork, I pay a lot of attention to abstraction, trying to pick out a ton of beautiful scenes of total chaos, and then turning them into interesting shapes and objects.

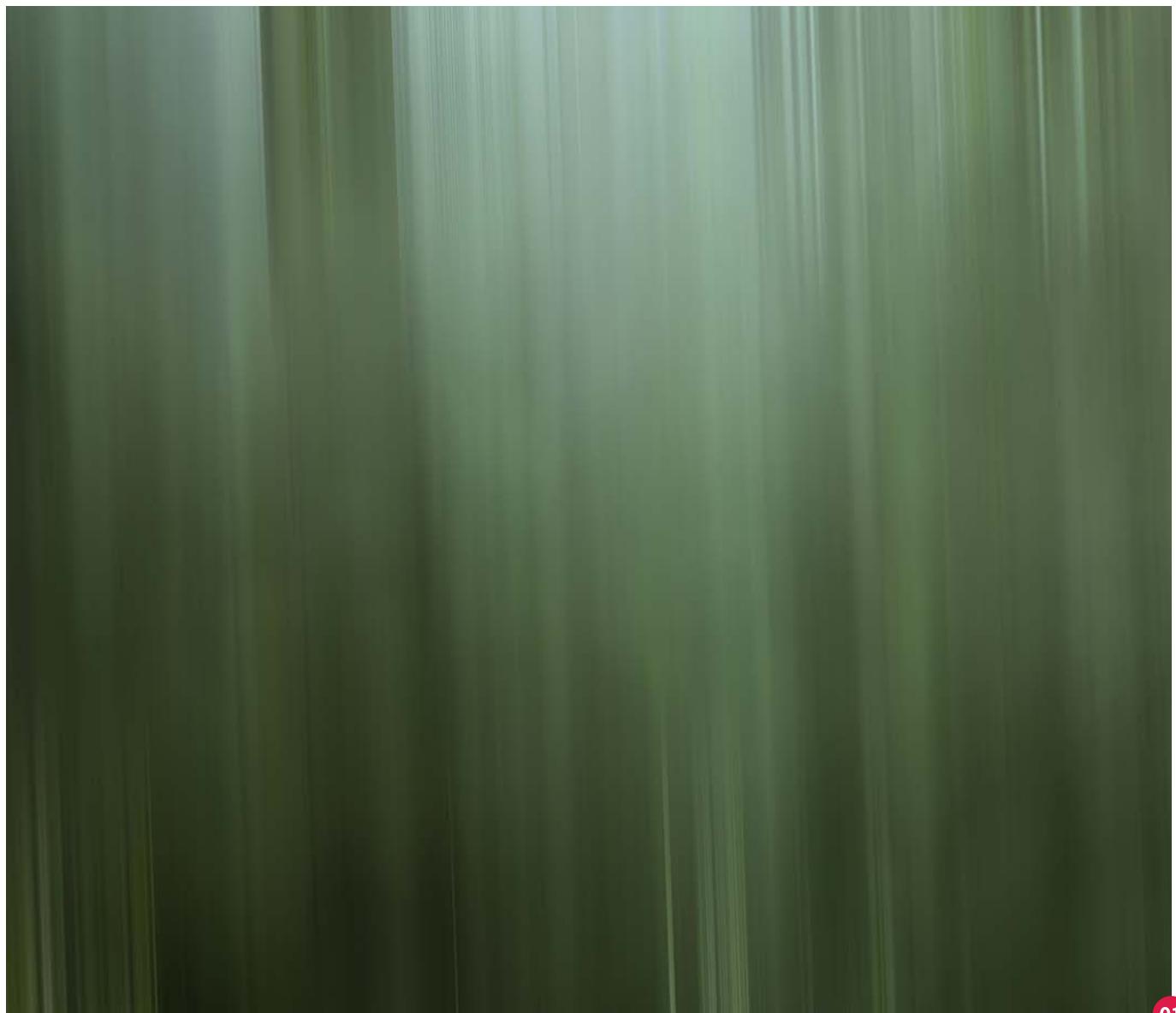
After I had decided what the scene would look like with the sketches I immediately turned to the issue of color. Having some variants in my head

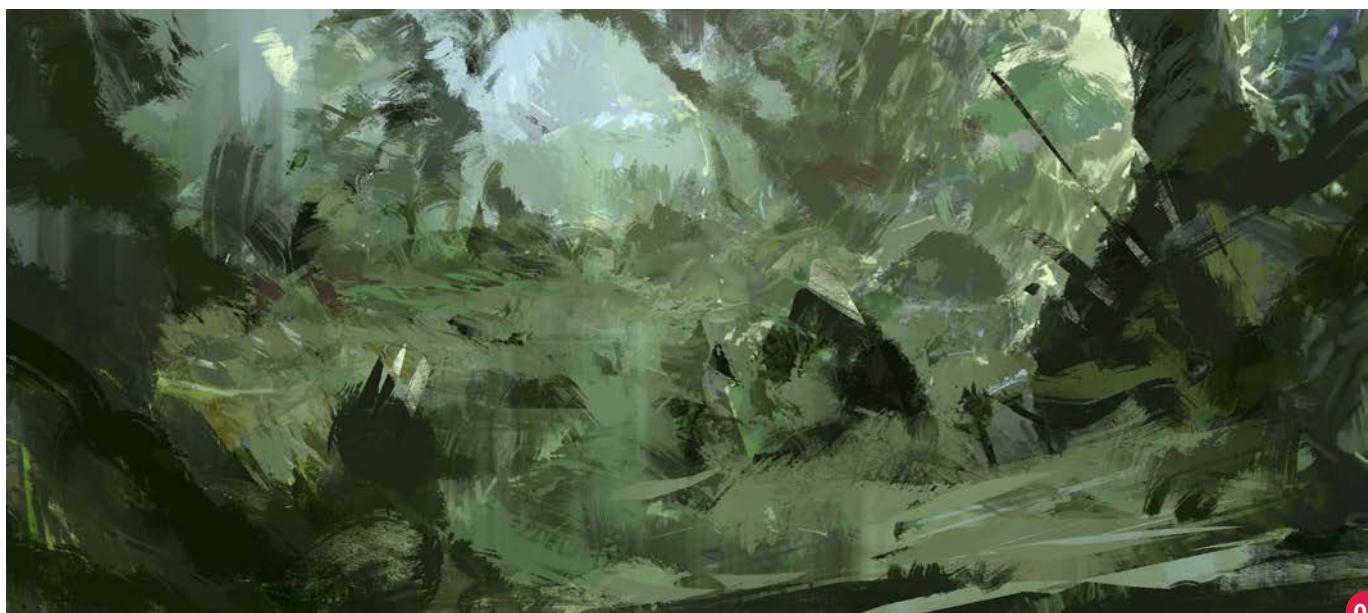
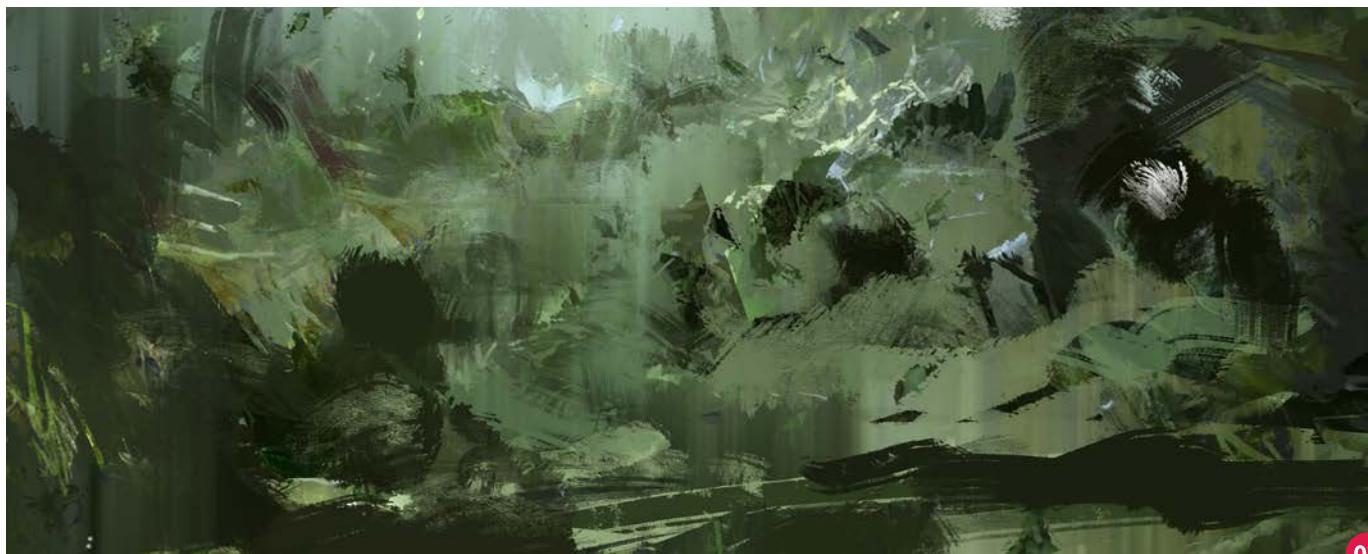
I started to experiment. Using a lot of different photos, I overlapped them and applied filters like motion blur. By distorting common features of photos, I got a background color palette, which I used later in the process.

This method is very convenient in terms of saving me time. The palette of colors with which I work changes over time, if I want to add some new interesting details or create a certain harmony of colors for instance.

I was able to create a basic background with a deeper contrast for this work by using the Level control and adjusting the color balance.

02 **Add abstract shapes:** I then began sketching the first details with different brushes. As I said in the first step, I pay attention to abstraction, trying to see and create as many interesting forms as possible, transforming them into fully fledged items of work later.





I edited the brushstrokes with the Eraser tool, removing the problematic details and leaving the more interesting ones. Doing this helped me to determine in general the composition and perspective of the work itself. In parallel with the work of the rubber, I added new details with brushes slipping from dark to bright colors to create more interesting shapes and details.

To correct some objects I used the Lasso tool. Highlighting the long and deformed lines, I put in two or three color variants of the overall palette. Then, using the eraser, I removed any unnecessary parts of the lines. Inspired by the idea of creating an interesting environment, I continued to draw different shapes and objects. For example, I took the idea of creating a fantasy world landscape and invented the shape of a suitable object. The object should attract the viewer's attention and make it clear that beyond our world there may be many other different worlds that are also as beautiful as our one.

03 Experiment with texture: One of my favorite stages is copying layers. For this work I took one layer, which was drawn with chaotic brushstrokes, copied it and moved it to the background. I then worked with the Eraser taking away the extra details I didn't need.

Next I drew some new shapes to create depth of detail for the general background and environment. I played with brushes, creating new strokes and experimenting with the result. For me it is important to create an interesting composition for the viewer that will be in harmony with the perspective and color, thus I could create the atmosphere I had in mind. In parallel to all these actions I constantly adjusted the levels and color balance, creating richness and depth again.

After these manipulations, I turned to the first texture mapping. The internet is a great thing for finding different textures and references. In this

artwork I had used some photos of the forest (seen in image 01). Adding them to the work I applied the blending modes Darken, Lighten, and Overlay. This was a great way to create more interesting shapes and details and at the same time I saved on time.

04 Blending modes: I used different blending modes as my first aim was to experiment at the beginning and refine the result on the way out. Taking one of the photos of the forest, I imposed it above the layers and applied ►

01 Find an idea for the scene and overlap photos to help select the correct color palette

02 Create the first parts of the composition

03 Textures and blending modes



04a



04b



05a



05b

the blending mode Darken. This took away all the bright colors of the picture leaving only the dark. Thus, when I adjusted the level, a lot of new interesting features and objects then appeared.

I removed any excess with the Eraser leaving an area I felt was necessary, and applied it wherever it would look interesting. For example, when I drew the ground I tried to make it more

detailed with a variety of different stones of different shapes, adding grass, and a tree trunk.

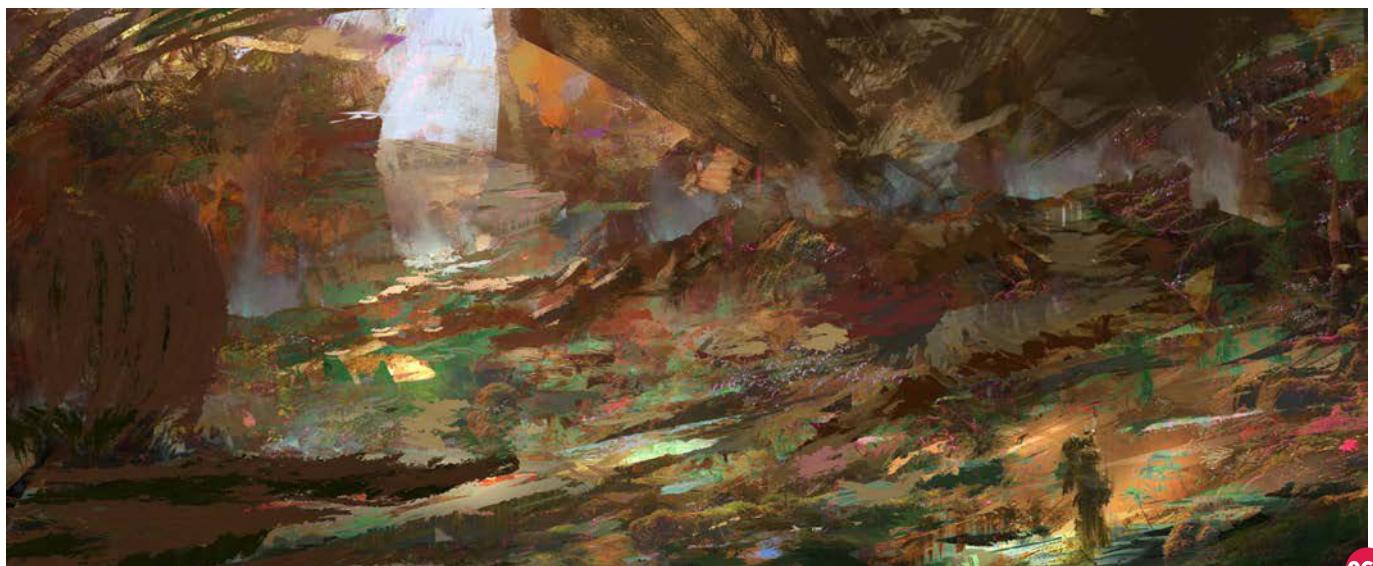
After this, I drew new objects and shapes with brushes which were in harmony with the texture that I had imposed. I then followed the same process with the other photo, superimposing it, choosing the Lighten mode, and adjusting the levels. With the Eraser I removed unnecessary

details and started to create the first signs of lighting in the work. Thus, after manipulating three or four photos, my new details began to emerge. Again, my main goal at the beginning of an artwork is to experiment.

05 Create atmosphere: When I create a location or environment I pay much attention to the atmosphere, trying to make it



06a



06b

match the color palette and lighting in general. For this artwork one of my main challenges in creating an atmosphere was the color harmony and the fall of light on different objects, such as different forms of stones, grass, and bumps. During the creation of *Valley of Color* I changed the color completely, changing green to brown to create the effect of a degree of warmth.

However, I left fragments of green in the middle and in the lower-right corner of the image. I regulated the levels and added new textures from photos, using the same blending modes, Darken and Lighten. On top of these new textures I created new strokes with line brushes again, not forgetting to remove any excess with the eraser. I left only the things that would play a significant role in the work itself.

06 Create a focus: I tried to decide what would be another important subject that would attract the viewer's attention. I decided to create a feeling of something extra-terrestrial; in

this case, my choice is a kind of rock. I wanted to draw a big deformed rock mass that came out of the ground and went up somewhere. I added stones and rocks using different brushes and textures. It made the piece more detailed, unlike the other objects and shapes that were in the background. Thereby I created a focal point for the viewer.

From the foundation of the earth comes the rock itself; I painted gaps in the ground for steam, and for the energy that comes out of these breaks I used very bright colors as highlights. Thus I created overlapping and, in my opinion, an excellent harmony of color.

07 Add volume: A silhouette of a character that is in the foreground creates a feeling that this is a really imposing location and a character in the background of all this would make it seem small. In some of my works, I add a little silhouette of the characters thus creating a feeling that the locations are huge.

I was inspired by the idea that there was something needed in the painting so I added a small silhouette.

Take, for example, the idea that in some sort of desert is this giant wall of several thousand meters and at the base of the wall is a small ▶

04a Impose a reference onto the layers and blend

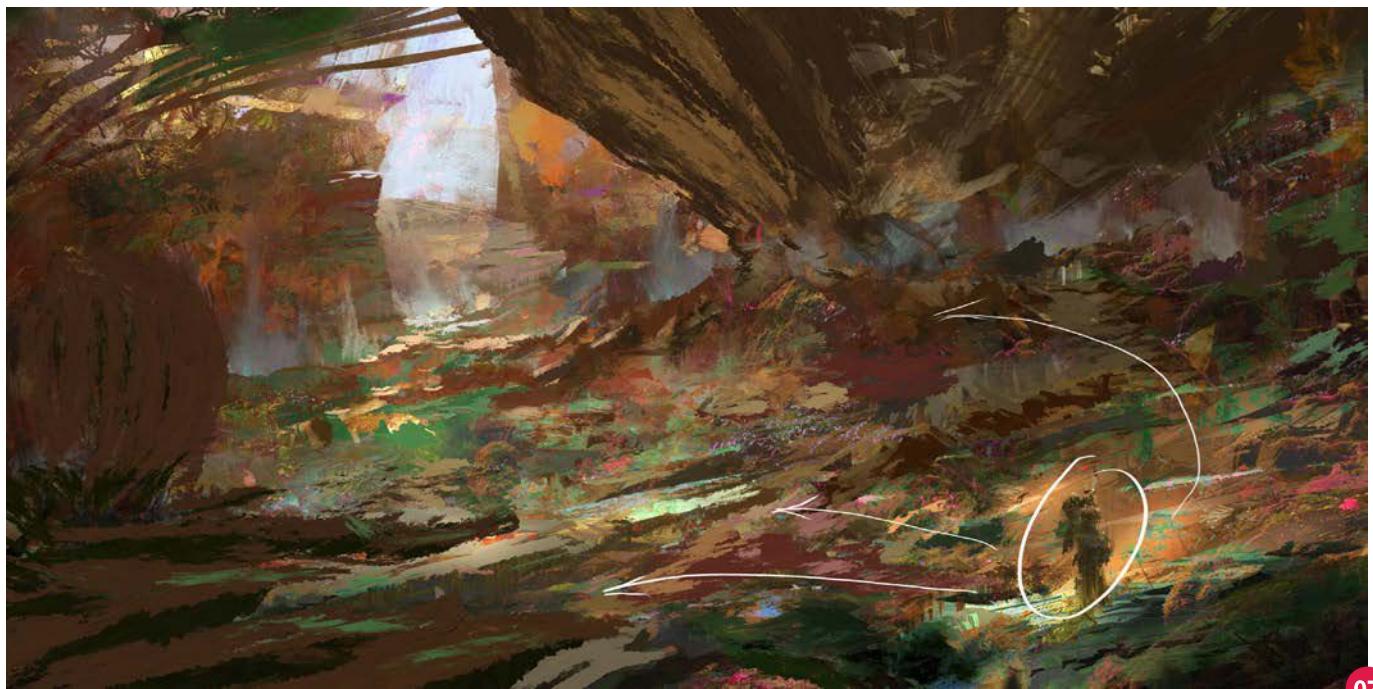
04b Edit and add new types of textures

05a The whole color scheme changed completely to give warmth

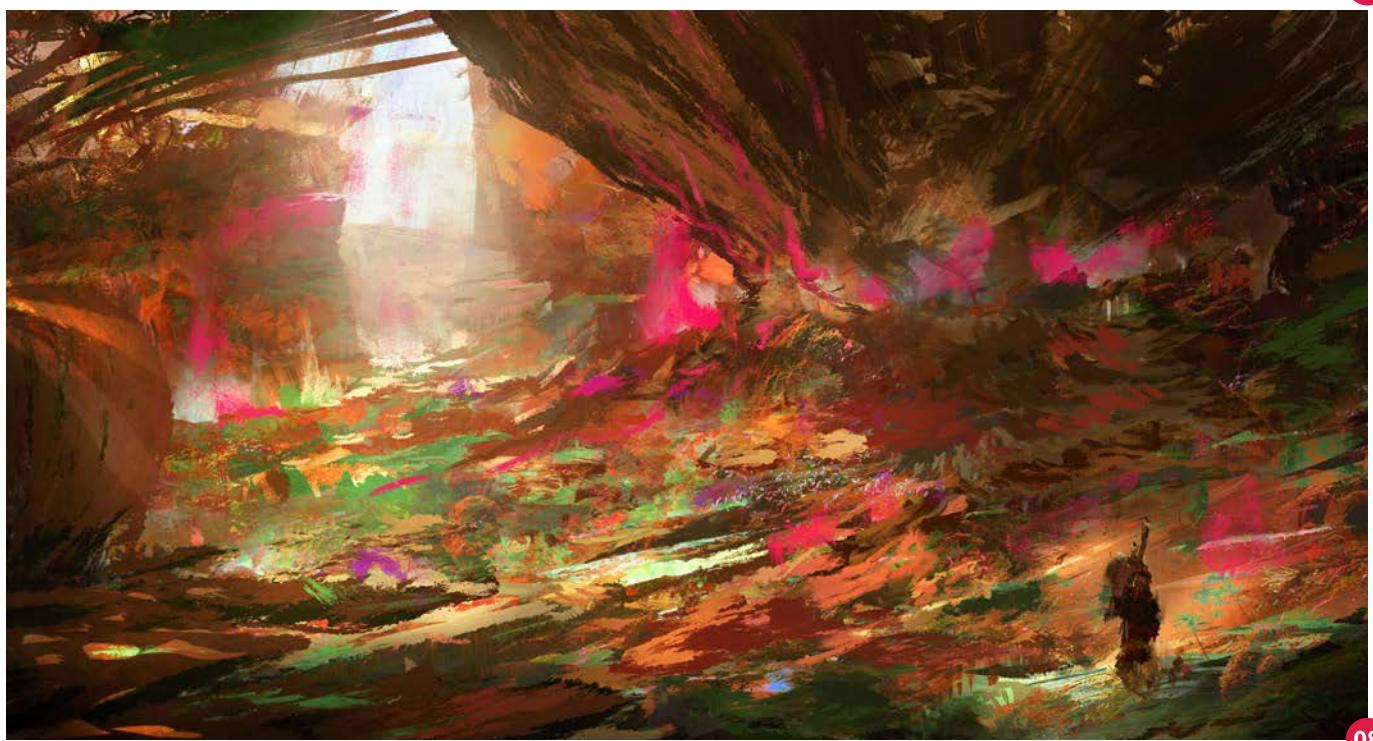
05b Add atmosphere

06a Add areas of bright color as highlights

06b Create a focal point



07



08

silhouette of the character. This makes the composition a more interesting environment in itself and it then seems three-dimensional and large. The feeling that this is really a giant wall will not leave the viewer.

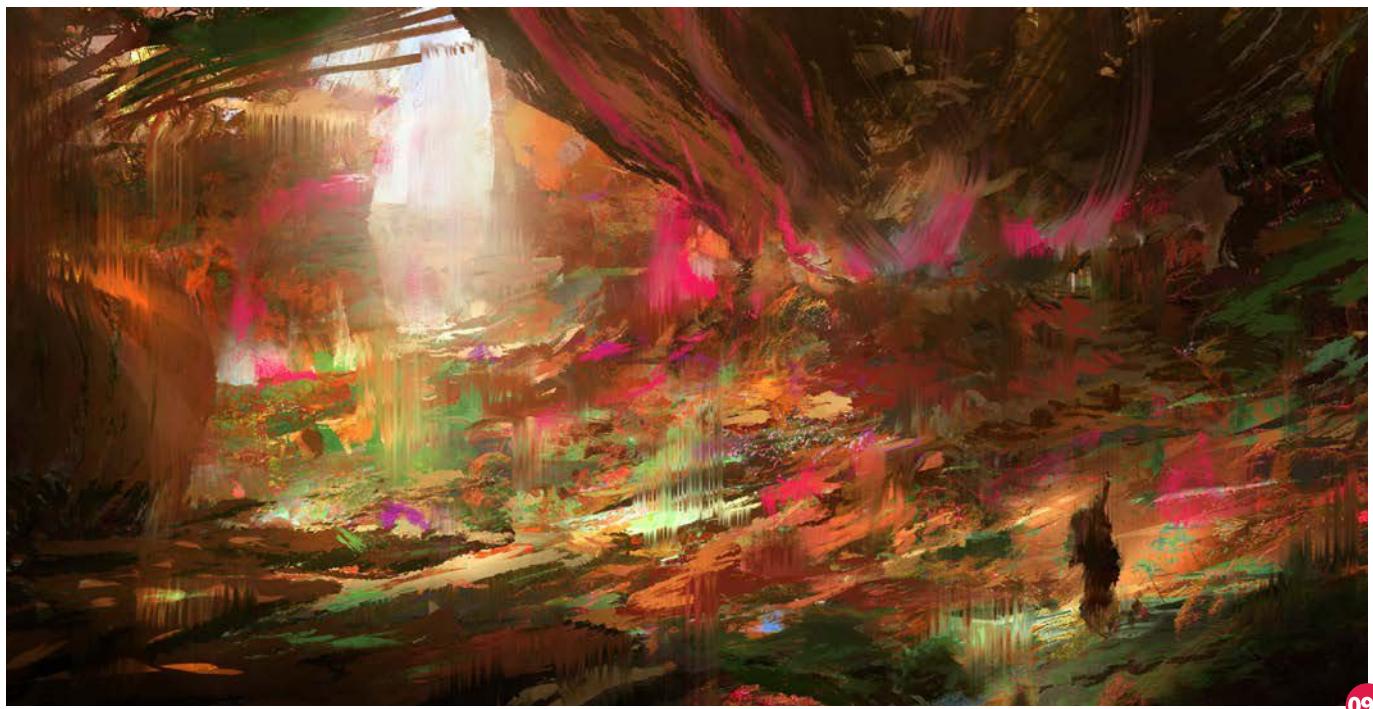
08 Color correction: In the final stages of my works, I spend time on color correction and the transformation of the entire image as a whole.

Using the methods of transformation (Warp or Perspective) I tried to give my work a more voluminous look. On the background I

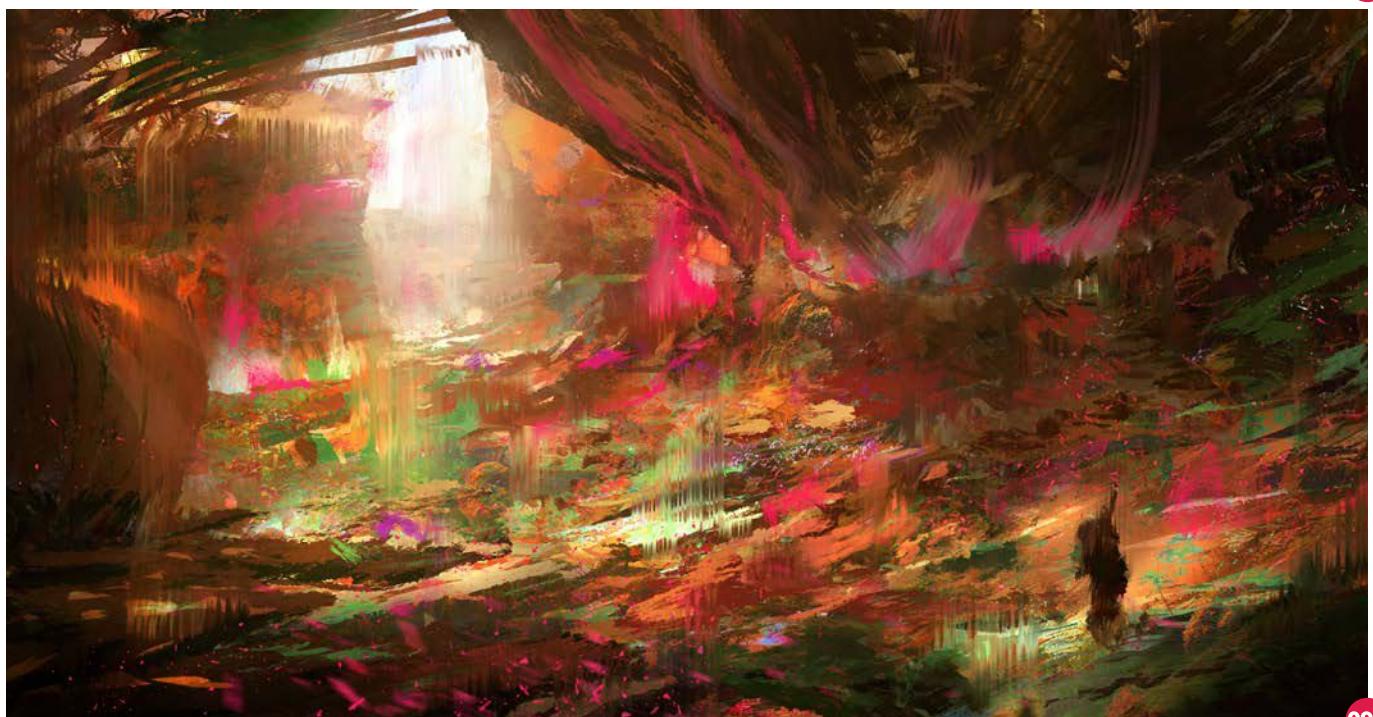
⚡ PRO TIP

Mix layers

Use a palette of color from different photos. Apply a filter such as motion blur to them to get different results and options. You can then tell the direction of the color, and its movement in any kind of direction. This technique can also help to build the entire composition as a whole. Doing chaotic brushstrokes and erasing parts you do not need, can help you to find an interesting variant of a scene and composition. In the background, use a blur filter like motion blur to add pictures, then use different elements on them like the blending modes Darken and Lighten.



09a



09b

overlapped soft brushes, using bright colors. The brushes themselves were set at a transparency of 5-10%. Using the Burn tool and the Dodge tool, I revised some areas of incidence.

Thus, I tried to move seamlessly from dark areas to bright and then to the brightest. This is very important for me when creating these works. For me, playing and experimenting with lighting has always held a special role in creating atmosphere and the idea of the work as a whole. The work was illuminated towards the end as I tried to bring it to the desired lighting level while maintaining contrast and color depth.

09 Generate style: The last stage of the creation of this work was the stylization. Styling certain objects and regions, for example with brushstrokes of oil or any other natural material, creates a sense of some of the dynamics and vibrations in the colors. Thus, in my works I tried to give them a certain charm with splashes of color in some areas giving, in my opinion, a special kind of effect.

While working on the styling I used the Mixer brush tool with different modes such as Dry, Wet and a Wet, Heavy mix. Playing with brushes and drawing lines that come from different areas and

objects, I tried to create some momentum and noise in the work. I continued to experiment with stylization until I was satisfied with the result. ●

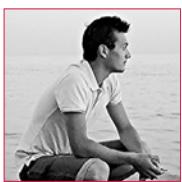
07 Volume and silhouettes

08 Atmospheric lights and shadows

09a Add style to work with natural material brushstrokes

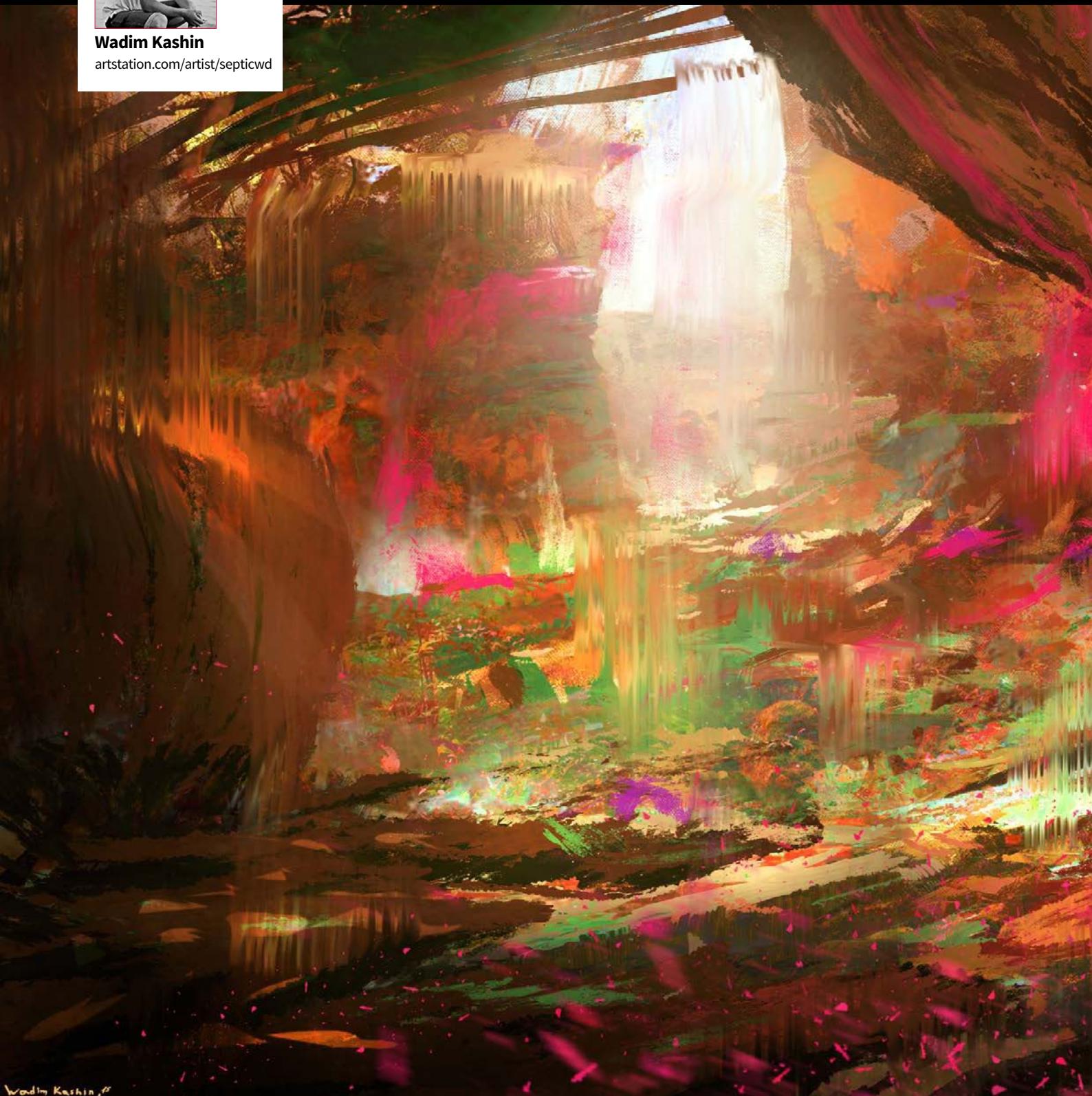
09b Add flecks of paint for the final image

The Artist



Wadim Kashin

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Beginner's Guide to Digital Painting in Photoshop: Characters

Character generation: Design and paint the face

by Bram 'Boco' Sels

Learn how to create a detailed face for your character in Photoshop
with this guide from expert concept artist Bram 'Boco' Sels 



The Artist



Bram 'Boco' Sels
artofboco.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

As a freelance illustrator and concept artist Bram has recently worked for companies like Ubisoft, Wideshot Entertainment, Marauder Film, Tokkun Studios and Centipede Press. Apart from that he's now working as a concept artist for the Belgium-based studio GriN on their upcoming indie title *Woolfie: The Red Hood Diaries*.

Portrait painting has been around for centuries. Before the invention of photography people mainly used it as a means to immortalize themselves, but after its invention it lost a lot of its popularity.

The reason for this was photography could achieve the same effect a lot quicker and thus cheaper. Since the rise of concept art however, techniques from portrait painting became a lot more popular again.

Be it as a way to put existing actors in imaginative environments, or to create characters that don't exist in real life, but look

so convincing that they very well could be. To create such a character it's important to master the techniques needed to create a life-like portrait.

In this chapter you'll learn, among other things, how the skull is the foundation of the head and how it changes the distribution of light on the face, you'll see how the direction of the light can dramatically change how a person looks, and you'll discover how the face is made up of different color zones.

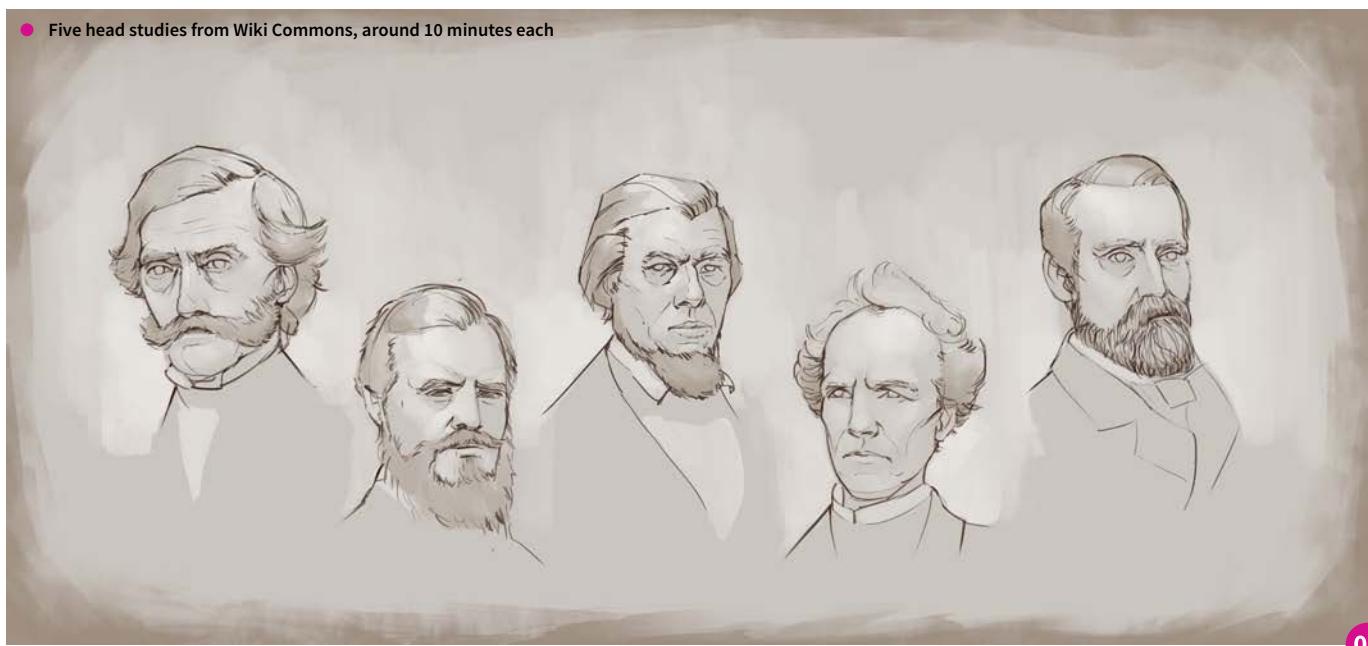
You'll learn everything you need to know to paint realistic imaginative faces from scratch.

1. Warm-up

It's important to warm up when starting on a new piece. For this piece I opened up Wiki Commons and browsed through their enormous library. It's a fun thing to do and browsing through different eras and different subjects expands your internal reference library each time.

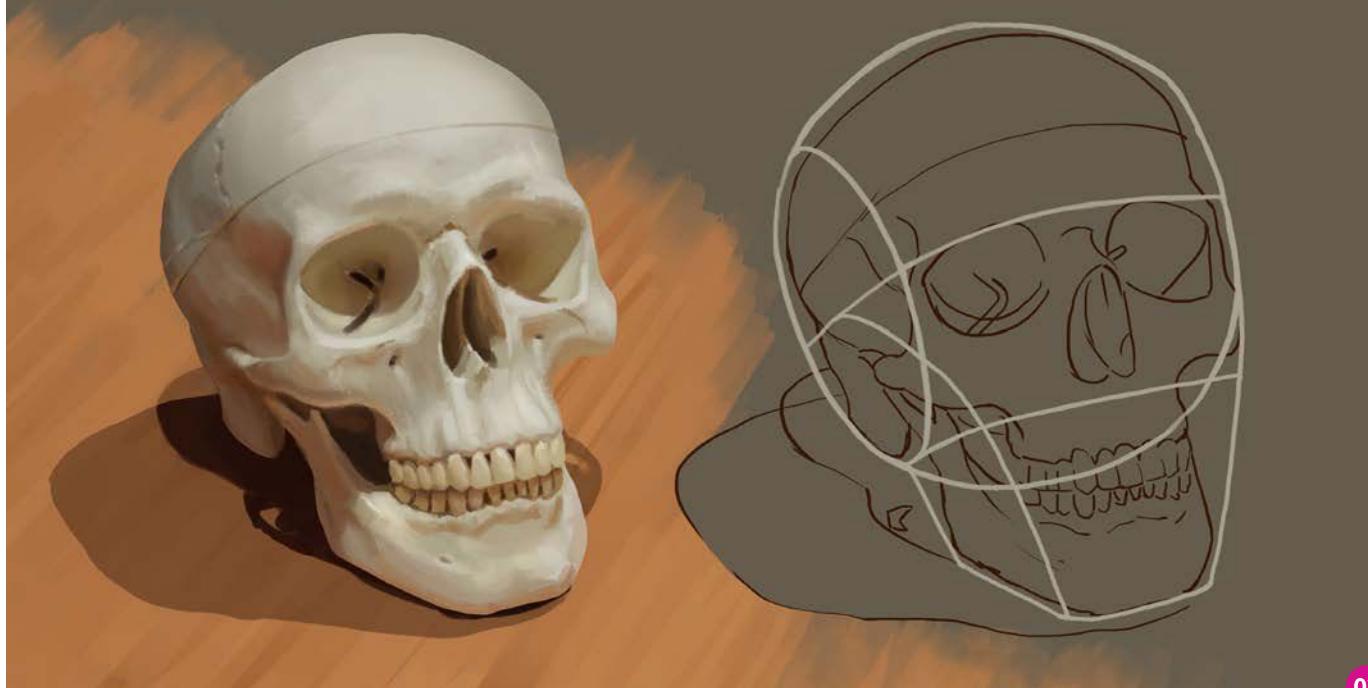
Eventually I stumbled on a set of early 20th-Century gentlemen and decided to do a study of a few of them. Something to think about while doing studies like these is how the eyes can really define the character of a person. Got to love that facial hair too, I wish I could get away with a mustache like that!

- Five head studies from Wiki Commons, around 10 minutes each

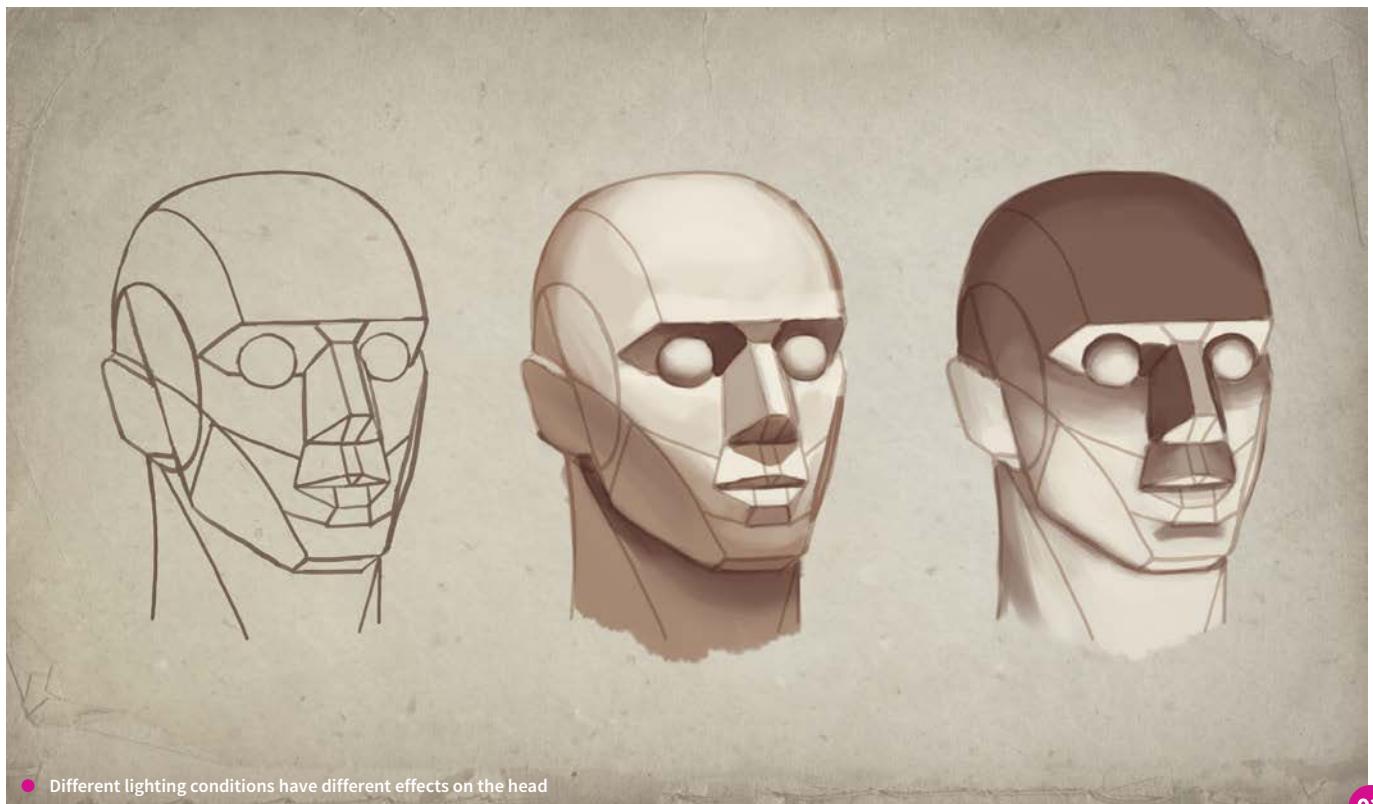


01

- A study of a skull on a desk. On the right you see how it can be reduced to basic and primitive shapes



02



● Different lighting conditions have different effects on the head

03

2. Skulls are awesome!

Write this down: you should do at least one skull study each year. Not only is it a cool subject, it really makes you understand how the human head works. How the jaw connects to the rest of the skull for instance, and how the brow and the cheekbones define the form of the head.

It's a good idea to get yourself an anatomically accurate skull to refer to while painting. When drawing the skull you'll start to notice that it basically consists of a few simple shapes.

A ball with the sides cut off, and the chin as a rounded square protruding from it. Understanding these simple shapes is half the battle when painting the head.

3. Lighting the face

Starting out with the simple shapes from the previous step, you can construct the rest of the facial features on top of it. Keep the facial features simple at first; it will be a lot easier to light them that way.

Notice how the nose protrudes from the face and how the eyes are (obviously) round and should be lit that way.

The two lighting schemes on the right are pretty basic but very common in concept art. The first has light coming from the top, the other from below. Depending on where the light comes from, some planes will be lit while others will hide in the

● The lineart for the head, trying to create character with the facial features



04

● Creating a mask, while simultaneously checking the silhouette



05

shadows. Always keep in mind how the planes are oriented towards the light. Planes directly facing the light should always be lightest.

4. Creating your own character

Inspired by the warm up, I wanted to create a face that looked both worn and rugged, but still stylish and early 20th-Century-esque. I wanted to create the main character for a fictional videogame, and so I chose to go with a Caucasian bearded hero-type.

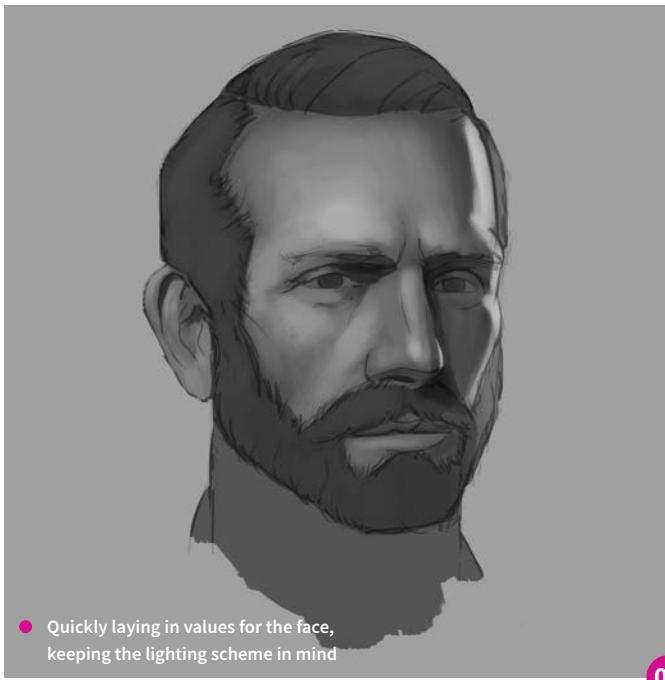
I started out with the basic shapes from the previous step, and once they were okay, I placed a layer on top for the details, systematically erasing the under drawing as I went. In this step it's important to really look at how facial features are constructed. Look at how the eyes have eyelids

and how they work. Note how the nose as well as the mouth is divided into planes that flow over into each other.

5. Masking the face

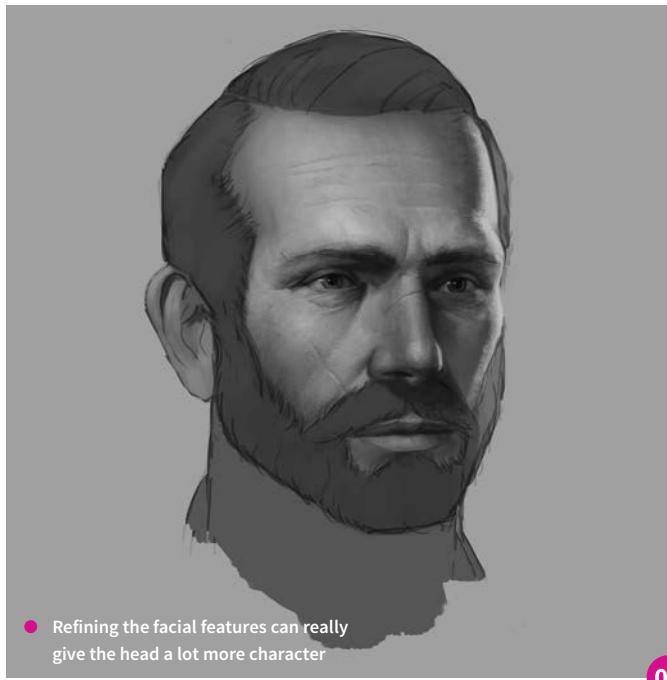
As with the body, I created a layer below the lineart to function as a mask. The idea is to keep all paint within the mask and still have the lines on top of it unharmed. Eventually these lines will be erased and blended with what's below.

Creating a one-color mask like this also gives you a clear view of the silhouette of the head. There's a lot of character in there as well; the hair for instance is slick and thin and cuts into the silhouette above the ears and on both sides of the forehead. The same goes for the beard and the left eye socket. ▶



- Quickly laying in values for the face, keeping the lighting scheme in mind

06



- Refining the facial features can really give the head a lot more character

07

6. Blocking out the main planes

With a key light coming from the front left and a rim light from behind right, I started blocking out the biggest parts of the face. I've put the hair on a separate layer so that I could focus on it later on. The same as with the body, I started out in black-and-white to really concentrate on getting the values right.

"Because the face is often the focal point of an image, it is important to get the facial features just right"

This is the step where knowing how the face is divided into planes really comes in handy. The planes that face the light directly catch most of it and will be the lightest. You'll also notice that some transitions will be sharp (like the front of the nose), while others will be a lot smoother (like the forehead).

7. Refining the face

Because the face is often the focal point of an image, it is important to get the facial features just right. If something is a little off it will skew the entire character. Get into the habit of flipping your image once in a while (Image > Image Rotation > Flip Canvas Horizontal) – it gives you a fresh view and you'll notice mistakes in a heartbeat.

While you're refining, it's also very important to gather the right reference. Look at how the eyes reflect the light source, how the tip of the nose often catches a highlight and how age lines turn with the shape of the skull.



- The face is roughly divided into these three color zones

08

Lastly, the head has a lighter side and a darker side. Depending on the side, it will differ how the facial features should be lit.

When rendering, I basically stick to the same brushes all the time – a basic Round brush and a textured brush. Using the opacity pen pressure toggle helps to get some interesting complexities. I often use a seamless texture that I use as a texture in my brushes as well. It has a convincing grain in it that works really well as pores.

8. The color zones of the face

When thinking about color, the face can be divided into different color zones. It all depends on the color of the light of course, but when the light is neutral the top part of the head tends to be more yellow, the middle part more red and the bottom part more blue/gray. This is especially true with male faces due to the facial hair they tend to have around the chin, which has a very distinct blue/gray tone. This should be subtle of course, and not to be exaggerated, but knowing those colors are there makes it easier to see them when looking at reference photos.

9. Toning the face

To tone the face I started out with a wash in the same color I plan to use for the body. After that I kept the painting mode of my brush on color, but changed the Opacity to 25%.

One by one I color-picked the colors from the last step and went over their respective zones. Again, look for some reference online and make a mental note of where the most saturated colors should be. You'll find the most intense reds around the tip of the nose and on the top of the cheekbones for instance. Don't overdo it though, or your character will quickly look like a drunk.

10. The head is not a cue ball

That's right; the head is not glossy and smooth like a cue ball. It's covered with little holes, pimples and pores; especially in the case of my character who I want to be a bit more worn than the average Joe.

I put some scars on his cheek and nose and used a textured brush to get some extra noise in the skin. I took the time to make the age lines pop and to polish up the eyes, livening them up some more. I also noticed that the forehead should be a little lighter and that the overall contrast could be boosted, so I tweaked those too. ●



● Applying the color zones on top of a brownish base color

09



● Building up character by adding little scars and irregularities

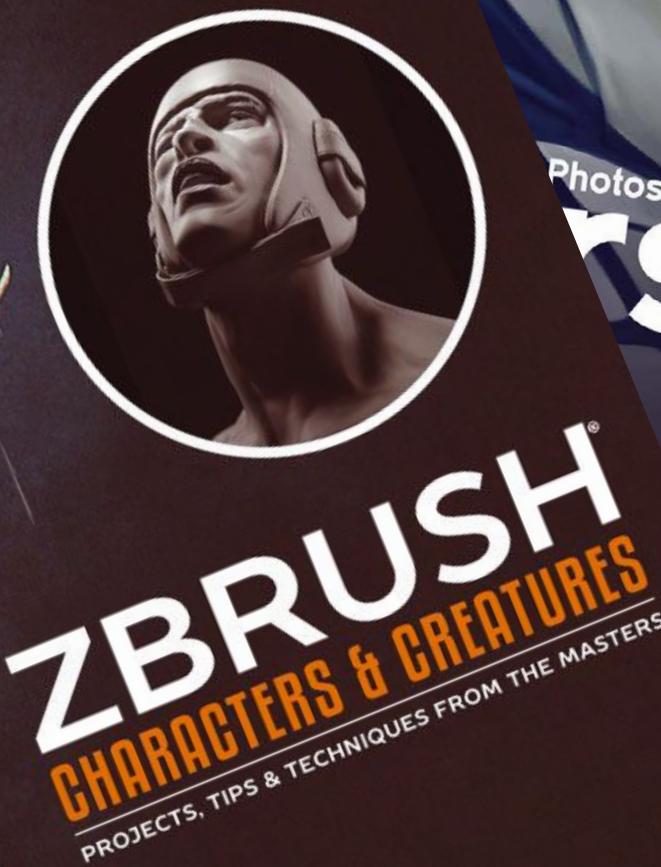
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